MILLS — OF GOD

ELINOR MACARTNEY LANE

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Rose E. Davis.
Brooklyn N.Y.
May 16, 1914

MILLS OF GOD

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MILLS OF GOD

A Novel

By

Elinor Macartney Lane

New York
D. Appleton and Company
1906

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TO

FRANCIS RANSOM LANE.

If there be aught in Robin Killduff's words
Of bravery or breeding; if the tale
Set forth that conduct which would most become
A scholar and a gentleman;
If love be there, selfless and true and high,
And loyalty enduring till the end;
If there be aught of these—they come from thee;
Take thou the praise, for thine indeed it is.

E. M. L.

December, 1900.

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"Though the Mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience stands He waiting,
With exactness grinds He all."

LONGFELLOW.

"The moving finger writes, and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it."

OMAR KHAYYAM.

PREFACE

THE events which are here set forth I had by way of my father, John MacLaren Macartney, who received the papers direct from his uncle, Robin Killduff.

As Mr. Killduff says little of himself in the story, it may be of interest to know that at the time my father knew him he was an unusually tall old gentleman, a bit daft on the subject of breeding, with an enormous quantity of iron-gray hair, a large face with high cheek-bones, and very fine and faithful eyes. He was disposed, especially as he grew older, to be extremely arbitrary about small affairs, given to the consumption, at unseasonable hours, of ex-

traordinary amounts of oaten cake, and to assaulting the flute in the late hours of the night, which many testify he played more vilely than any other has ever done before or since. He was much given to outdoor sports, and to the end of his life was never seen without two or three dogs racing at his heels. He was noted for his constancy, both in his loves and hates—one of the latter being toward Lady Bedford, "who," he told my father, "was a chattering body of no great moment, one way or another"; although in his story he has ever spoken of her with great compliment and fairness. Of the love and honour in which he was held in the country-side it is needless to speak. Twice in his later life he was asked to stand for Congress—an honour, however, which, with great dignity and simplicity, he declined.

The tale, just as Mr. Killduff set it down, I think can injure none. It carries

its own note of warning. I have made few changes, and those only to leave out, here and there, pages of panegyrics on Lady Elinor which would be but tedious reading for the general. If it be unwise to mention, although but hiddenly, a royal scandal, the traditions of which are still rife along the banks of the river James, I offer as an excusing that it was at the root of the whole trouble; and then, too, it is a great relieving of my mind, for the story, in broken parts, has lived with me ever since I was a child. I have sat for hours before the pictured loveliness of Elinor Grafton; and the unsigned portrait of Madame Dulany, with the Madonna face and the sorrowful lips, was for many years the first thing upon which my childish eyes rested each morning as I awakened. My favourite playing-place was in the family burying-ground, and many times I have lain amid the tall grasses, contemplating

with uncomprehending eyes the inscription on the stone which marks the last resting-place of a man—Robin Killduff MacLaren by name—who was great and strong and true, and, what is finest of all, loyal to the end. At his own request, his grave was beside that of Lady Elinor, and underneath the date and age was graven upon the stone:

"From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

ELINOR MACARTNEY LANE.

VIRGINIA, *April, 1900.*

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MILLS OF GOD

CHAPTER I

THERE was in Virginia, about twenty miles above the tide-water of the James, in the year of grace seventeen hundred ninety-eight, an old mansion, set well back from the river, on a wooded eminence of its own. It was a romantic-looking place, built after the manner of so many of the colonial houses, with a main building, the five large pillars of which were carried upward to the roof, and two wings, one on either side, which ran far back, forming an inclosed court in the rear, in which were the domestic offices. It was built of the light-coloured brick, which had been brought from England many years before, and, although fallen

into disrepair, it was still a solid and sincere old house, from which the land sloped very gradually on the east toward the river, and on the west with great abruptness, through the wooded land, to the brook which separated the estate from the neighbouring one of Deepdeen. The place had remained un tenanted from the time of the Treaty of Paris until the year mentioned, when it became, by purchase from the Government, which had seized it for unpaid taxes, the property of some Irish people named Dulany.

Rumour soon began to spread through the country-side of the chests of tapestries and silver plate, the paintings and brocades, which were being brought, by almost every ship of merchandise which came to port, for the redecoration of the old house. There were great carved doors and casements of oak from Flanders, mahogany furniture from France, mirrors and glass-

ware from Venice, which set the whole county agog with talk of the recklessness of expenditure.

Of all this I speak but by hearsay, as it was before my time, my intimate knowledge of these affairs beginning a little later, upon my arrival in America as under-secretary to Sir William Grafton, of the younger branch of the house of the great duke, who was seeking to mend the family fortunes by some ventures in the New World. It was for some remembered kindness of my father's to him when they were lads together at Christ Church, Oxford, that the post was offered to me, nor had I ever seen Sir William when his letter came to my father's home in Scotland. I was young and raw, slow of speech, and making no figure in society, and it may be easily seen that I looked upon a visit to the States with some pleasure and excitement.

On my arrival at Deepdeen, which was

the name given the Grafton estate, I found Sir William to be a gentleman of about the age of my father, although much better preserved, tall and of a commanding presence, but with kind and genial eyes. I found him later to be a singularly just man, a bit bookish and of a dry nature, given to telling long stories with endless detail and little point, which made him ever tedious in conversation, but in all his business enterprises, whether in fish or fur, showing an unusually sagacious mind, and withal remaining to this day my ideal of gentlemanly behaviour.

I had been a little above two months in the country when the news was spread abroad that the owners of the new-garmented house were daily expected, and one June evening Sir William and I, having but just come in from the far tobacco fields, we learned of their arrival from Sandy, the Jack o' Lantern. Sandy, a scarlet-haired,

white-faced, impish child, of any age between seven and eleven, belonged to some people who lived in a singular collection of outhouses, cows, goats, dogs, and many young of the human species, over on Buler's Creek. He probably had a surname, but until this day I have never heard it, being known far and wide by the gentlefolk, to whom he had commended himself by force of his whimsical intelligence, as the Jack o' Lantern. He came around the corner of the house at a dead run, stopping so short in front of us that I made sure he must have gone far toward dislocating his neck.

"They've come," he said.

"Who?" Sir William inquired.

He made no answer in words, but lifted his arm toward the Dulany house, lowered it in an impersonal manner, and dug his toes into the gravel of the walk.

"How many have come?" I inquired.

"There wath Her," he answered, for he had a lisping in his speech, "and two otherth, and the woman with the face and two men and two leafths."

"Two which?"

"Leafths; out of bookth, you know."

"Leaves out of books," I repeated, something muddled.

"Pages, perhaps," suggested Sir William.

Sandy nodded in the affirmative. "Yeth, leafths. They carried thingth. One had a thplendid green bird that talked, and there wath one who thpoke different, and Her, and peoples and bundles."

"And her?" I suggested.

"Yeth," he said, "and Her."

"What is she like?" Sir William asked, amused at the way the child dwelt on this one person.

"She ith tall," he answered, "and her hair ith like thith," and he touched the

black velvet of Sir William's coat, "and her eyes like blue starth, and the rest all thtand and look at her, and when she smilth she maketh you feel queer. She ith thplendid. I went bethide Her."

"Ah, indeed!" said Sir William.

"Yeth," Sandy went on, "and she gave me thith."

He drew out a bright golden guinea from his pocket.

"She gave every one thomething, and laughed, but the rest got white pieces. I wath the only one who got yellow. She likth me. She said who lived over here, and I told her."

"Would it be indiscreet to inquire what you were moved to impart?" Sir William asked in an over-polite manner.

"I said there wath you," here he indicated Sir William; "and that you wath nith—and I thaid there wath him," pointing toward me; "and that he wath nith

too, but ugly ; and that he made a noise on a whitthle that wath terrible."

"From which I am to gather that you do not like my flute-playing," I observed gravely.

"It hurth," he answered, with an unmistakable gesture of covering his ears with his hands, and, in a moment more, was gone at a headlong gait to spread the news further.

"And Her—and Her—and Her." Sandy's story often comes back to me. It was to be the story of my life. And Her—and Her—and Her.

It was not long before I came to have more accurate knowledge of our new neighbours, and I found the family proper to consist of but three persons. Mistress, or, as she came to be called, Madame Dulany, who looked still very young (although Miss Elinor would be sixteen at the time), was a tall, dark-looking body, who seemed to

have but badly sustained some tragedy in the past. She would be constantly looking over her shoulder, as though in fear of something, and had a way of starting sentences which she would never finish, but, allowing her voice to trail off into silence, would forget your very presence with her eyes fixed on you. Not that she was always thus, for I have seen her, when some wrong was named, especially such wrongs as are done to women, flash out of her quiet with such fire and vehemence as to carry everything before her. Little was said of her past. Her husband, an officer in the Irish Dragoons it was given out, had lost his life in India the year of Miss Elinor's birth, since which time Madame had done little but travel from one country of Europe to another. Always keeping Madame close company might be found Mistress Randolph, a distant kinswoman and superior kind of housekeeper or under

friend, with a figure like a meal sack tied in the middle, a fat face and sleepy eyes, but orderly, orthodox, and sympathetic, with a wonderful gift at silence and a shrewd eye for management.

And of her, of Miss Elinor, the daughter and only child of the house, even at this day, when life's tragedy is over, and I, tired with old age, can view even calamity with much indifference, my heart beats louder as I write. She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen—so beautiful that, later when we were abroad together, I have seen stolid German peasants touch their caps to her and stand in daze at her loveliness as she passed them by; and once, at the great ball at Carleton House, Mr. Sheridan excused himself for drowsiness, which may have been due to the port, by saying that "Lady Elinor Grafton is so beautiful she sets all men dreaming." Her portrait was painted for the Prince of Wales by Sir

Thomas Lawrence (although there was reason for that besides her great beauty), and Sir Thomas Moore writ one of his most charming love poems to her. I but set these things down to show it was not the partiality of my thought alone which called her the most beautiful woman of her time.

I can recall, as a man does a picture with which he has lived until every line and shade of it can be brought back at will, the first sight I ever had of her, as she stood at the little foot-bridge, her black page carrying a great bunch of red roses behind her. It was not that her hair was, as the Jack o' Lantern had said, "like black velvet, and her eyes like blue stars," not that her face had the bloom of roses in it, that gave me the wonder of her. I had seen black hair and blue eyes and fair skin before now, and had gone my way forgetting; but here, in the short scarlet lip, which swept back in a

complacent curve to show the white line of the teeth, there were race, passion, and intelligence ; and in those wondrous eyes, which looked out through the longest lashes I have ever seen, there was a great power and a greater insolence, as though they laughed a little at all things created, even their owner ; and altogether I thought, here is a woman for whose love a man might die—or kill for the wanting of it.

She wore a black satin petticoat and an overgown of black satin, with scarlet flowers on it. This was cut away to show the neck and turn of the shoulders, rising above a ruffle of lace, as was the fashion of the time. She wore, too, a monstrous big hat, with many nodding plumes upon it, and carried a tall staff, with ribbons hanging from it, after the French fashion. She was altogether distracting and bewildering in the extreme, not only to me, who was country bred, but to Sir William, who stood

beside me, who had seen the greatest beauties of England, and still remained a bachelor. She saw that we were intending to cross the foot-bridge, over which but one could go with any comfort at a time, and she called to Sir William, whom she already knew, having met him the day he called to pay his respects to her mother.

"Go back, sir. All the lads of the village give place to me."

I can not set down the coming and going of the dimples, nor the drooping of the eyes, which still revealed the gleam of them, but not the intention.

"I am no lad," Sir William answered, smiling back, but holding his position.

"All men are children till they die of old age," Miss Elinor responded, coming straight over so that we must needs make way for her, and, from the time she walked past him, her chin well up in the air, but with a certain consciousness of manner,

which bespoke that she knew we were looking at her, it was all over for my master, and all his years of bachelorhood were lived down in as many seconds.

"I am going home with you to your mother, to complain of you for obstructing the highway. We are already great friends, your mother and I."

"*She* will doubtless be glad to see you, then," Miss Elinor said demurely, with a little teasing emphasis on the word, and, Sir William dismissing me, the two of them walked off together up the steep path, and I heard her laugh coming backward through the dogwood blossoms and over the elderberry blooms, like the ringing of merry little bells, and I went homeward to my accounts with many disturbing thoughts of an old song which every one has heard:

> "A lady fair,
> With coal-black hair,
> All dressed in a flowered gown."

A certain wit hath said that there is a woman at the bottom of all trouble, and that it is nearly always an Irish woman, and indeed this seemed to be the case with us. Before Miss Elinor had been three months in the country she was the county toast, such lightness, and grace, and fire inflaming many hearts for love of her, so that wherever she went there seemed to be trouble brewing. There were fine gentlemen with gay faces riding up the river road, and fine gentlemen with faces not so gay riding down the river road again, and flowers and hampers of fruit with love notes tucked in them, and all the ongoings which came at the love-making season. There were horseback ridings and afternoon teas on the lawn, and many happy little doings to which we were frequently bidden, Madame Dulany having been gracious enough to find some pleasure in my company, and including me for this reason in many of the invitations.

Among all this adulation Miss Elinor walked, I can not say unconsciously, but rather as if it were her due, accepting homage from men as naturally as she accepted the blue of the sky and the air which she breathed, laughing at the love notes, laughing a little more teasingly at the writers of them, showing favour to none, and seemingly regarding the whole thing in the nature of a necessary evil from which she might as well extract as much amusement as possible.

She had been but little above three months at Ingleside when there occurred the affair of St. George Page, which drew such a talk about her name that the entire country rang with the clatter of it. This young Page was a man of some parts, English by birth, with a moderate fortune, and a great idea of his own importance. The strongest thought of his life seemed to be that a man must ever assert himself, and

that a woman should be kept well in the rear of him as the background against which he might shine. He had spent an afternoon with Miss Elinor under the beeches, holding forth, no doubt, on the whole of womanly duty, and had but newly mounted his horse and ridden away when she came up on the long veranda where Sir William, her mother, and I were drinking tea.

"I am going"—she said, in a sweet, warm, intimate way she had at times, as though we were all one with her—"I am going to be an instrument in the hands of Providence."

"Poor Mr. Page!" Sir William observed with a laugh.

"'Twas not I that mentioned Mr. Page," Miss Elinor said demurely. "I but made a general observe. However, it would be a just and holy thing to bring him to a wiser frame of mind."

And bring him to a different if not a

wiser frame of mind she did, for in three weeks from that time he was found hanging in his own room to one of the wooden cross-beams, the breath almost gone from his stupid body. It was fully three weeks before he was enough recovered from this neck-stretching to be sent to his father's estates in England, where, let it be hoped, he found the feminine background for which he was seeking. Well, the women clacked about the affair till the noise deafened your ears, and the men repeated the tale that when Miss Elinor heard of the affair she observed dryly :

"I always thought the man was born to be hanged."

Then they toasted her beauty and wit and laughed at St. George Page for a presumptuous fool, which was a naked truth regarding him ; and the men forgot, but the women, as is their wont, forgot nothing.

Following close on this affair came the

duel of Sir Lionel Fairfax and his cousin Montgomery, who drew swords about Miss Elinor at the King's Court fox-hunt. It was said that she broke an engagement with one for the other, though she ever denied having an engagement with either. The truth of this it was impossible to doubt, as she rode to the meet with Sir William and myself. Mr. Montgomery, it appears, rode up to his cousin as soon as he saw him enter the field, and, although there had been bad blood between them for some time, they saluted with great courtesy. By reason of their both being gentlemen, it was impossible for them to bring a woman's name into the affair, so that Mr. Montgomery said, speaking low and very deliberate :

"I dislike the colour of your neckcloth. No gentleman would wear it !"

To which Sir Lionel responded by turning suddenly bloodless and striking his

cousin full in the face with his riding glove. They fought that evening in the beech wood, back from the cross roads; both were wounded, and it was a bad thing altogether, in many ways, for the worry of all this to-doing fell so strong on Madame Dulany that I am convinced it went far toward bringing about the tragedy of Miss Elinor's marriage.

Gossip about the Dulanys had arisen before this, however, due in part, I believe, to a kind of jealousy among the women folk of Miss Elinor's wonderful beauty and to a regal sort of bearing which never won for her the love of her own sex; and also, I think, to a resentment of the neglect of madame to respond to the advances of her neighbours as they thought their dignity warranted. Sly questions were asked of the source of payment for all the expenditures, and rumours of mysterious visitors who came from the boat landing at night,

and left again after several days, none having seen them but Madame and Mistress Randolph, who carried in their meals herself. And after these visits, it was rumoured, there was gold going for every one and for every purpose, no matter how foolish.

All this time there were letters being carried back and forth from our house to the Dulanys, and a blind man could have seen that my master was daft in his love for Miss Elinor; but while the notes from our side were from Sir William to Miss Elinor, those from the other were more often from Madame Dulany; nor did Miss Elinor seem to charge her mind with the matter at all. From the beginning, however, Madame had seen which way Sir William's heart turned, and from the very first she favoured the match. As I have said, Miss Elinor seemed for a while to be prejudiced neither for nor against Sir Wil-

liam as a husband, but after the matter of the duel, and the attempted hanging of St. George Page, by reason no doubt of Madame's insistence, the affair became more importunate. One evening, after a stormy discussion with her mother upon the subject, I heard that Miss Elinor flung herself out of the room in tears. That night, immediately after supper, Madame Dulany sent for her daughter. What was said at that meeting became known to me years afterward, and I know that it was the turning of Elinor Dulany's life. Almost immediately after this interview she consented to the marriage, but, from that time forth, she held aloof from her mother, as though in judgment of some by-gone act.

It was in January, seventeen ninety-three, that Miss Elinor became Lady Elinor Grafton at a wedding, the sadness of which sickens me still in my thoughts. It was sure the maddest marriage ever made.

Here was a girl under seventeen, full of fire and beauty, of an imaginative and passionate nature, tied for life to a man whose best years were behind him, and in whom the desires of youth were long over. Nature and sense cried out against it, and I have always thought that the tragedy of many lives might have been averted if there had been a man at that interview between Madame and her daughter on the night the decision was made, to put some sanity into the hysteria of an embittered and unreasoning woman. The marriage, if marriage it could be rightly named, was the strangest one that ever fell under my observation, for it had in it, to my thinking, more of the relation of father and child than of that fonder tie which binds husband and wife as one flesh. Not that there could be ever any question of Sir William's affection for my lady, for it was apparent in the most trivial turn of his affairs, but he

ever treated her as a priceless gem or some rare flower, or as a beautiful picture to be put in some niche of its own, rather than as a woman, who was bone of his bone and to be the mother of his children.

I have said before that Sir William was a most just man, which was to the end of his life a plain truth concerning him in all matters save one, and this was in the affairs of my lady. In these he seemed to have no higher sense of justice than that she should have whatever she desired, let who would be the loser; and this feeling was carried so far that Lady Elinor often stood abashed at Sir William's anger over some trivial disappointment of hers; and as time went by she grew into the habit of keeping all such things from him, for her own peace of mind as well as his.

It was the first year of her marriage that my real acquaintance with Elinor Grafton began; the knowledge of her came bit by

bit, for she was never a person easy to know. From her coming to Deepdeen there were times when she made merry, when she was gay as became her youth, but these periods were ever succeeded by ones of contemplation and silence, and I have often come upon her somewhere in the grounds sitting off by her lone, with a look in her eyes which I can no better describe than expressive of a great wonderment of things, and as if she were trying to solve the riddle of life to which none can give fair answer. 'Twas one morning during this time that she came into the domestic office where I was engaged upon some emergent affairs about the new tobacco. She brought the sunshine with her as she stood in her gay dress and flowered hat, a book held beneath her arm.

"Good-morning to you, Mr. Killduff," she said, dropping her eyes. She knew she was interrupting my work, knew just

as well that I was glad to be so interrupted.

"Good-morning, Lady Elinor," I responded, rising, but holding my pen in readiness to go on with my accounts.

"I have come to talk with you. Accepting the urgent invitation which you do not extend, I shall take a chair. As the talk promiseth to endure for some time, will you not sit down also? There is ever something restless in a conversation carried on on foot."

I did as I was bidden with a smile.

"Sir William tells me that you are a very fine scholar, Mr. Killduff."

"Thank you, my lady."

"He says that, like your father before you, you were held in high repute at the university."

"Thank you, my lady."

"He says that you have Latin and Greek, which do very well," and before I

could make reply she answered herself gravely, and in my manner :

"Thank you, my lady," at which I laughed and put down my pen, as she had intended.

With this gaining of my entire attention came one of the veerings of her nature, which dazzled me to the very end.

"I want to be taught," she said, the smiling and raillery all gone from her. "I want that you should teach me. I want to find out why it all is. There must be something more than *this*," and here she made a little gesture which seemed to include her whole life. "There must be some meaning to things which I can not discover. I misdoubt at times that I make but a sad figure of a woman. I can keep a secret ; I lose no sleep over an ill-fitting gown ; leave my neighbours' affairs to their own directing ; can speak naked truth when necessary ; have an unapproved tolerance

of sin; little use for tears, and fear for no man."

"Are you hoping to change these special virtues by means of the Latin and Greek?" I asked, smiling at her.

"Not I," she answered, "but perhaps some regular work may give my life the flavour which I find sometimes it lacks. I will be a good pupil; I shall indeed work very hard and aim to be little trouble."

There was, of course, but one answer to be given, and it was in this manner that our studies together began, which lasted interruptedly over many years, during which Lady Elinor proved indeed a hard student and an apt pupil, with a bit of flouting sometimes at my mind, which, compared to hers, arrived but slowly at its conclusions.

"I own," she said one day, "that your opinions are apt to be the just ones, but I have so many more than you! I can have seven or eight while you are getting one.

True, mine may be all wrong, but I make up in quantity what the quality lacks. You are a very slow man in your mind, Professor Killduff," and she broke into a merry laugh of comprehension at her own teasing, in which I joined.

It was through this daily intercourse that the real nature of her became known to me: the largeness of judgment; the pride; the generosity, which, as she stated herself, was in a great part mere carelessness; the impatience of detail, and, most of all, a lawlessness which questioned the right of God or man to interfere with her in any matter whatsoever.

Of the reckless generosity of her I would write at some length, for she set so little store by her possessions that on the impulse of the moment she would give away things of great value to any who chanced to desire them. I can see her in my memory crossing the courtyard with

some entirely unworthy mendicant, and coming to me, with the look of a child who knows that he is doing something wrong, but is nevertheless confident that he will not be scolded, telling me to give this man ten pounds, or twenty pounds, or a new horse, or to have his house fixed. If I remonstrated, as I was sometimes forced to do, she would say :

"Come, now, don't haggle, Mr. Killduff. You know yourself it's a loan to the Lord."

"It's an encouragement of incompetency," I answered her once.

"And if He has seen fit to allow incompetency, it's not my place to criticise it," she responded quickly.

And another time, when I asked her the sense of this eternal giving, she answered, with the look in her eyes of speaking white truth :

"I am trying to persuade the Almighty

that I am a Christian—a thing which I pointedly suspect I am not"; and she left me to my own reflections, which accorded with an all too great nicety with her own. She was something very beautiful, very fine and lovable, of an entirely splendid and compelling personality, but I misdoubt me there was ever something pagan in her heart.

So for a year or two she went on with her studies in seeming content, although I could but think Sir William's attentions were irksome to her at times. She treated him as a child might an over-indulgent father, going to him with everything from an ill-fitting gown to the latest prank of her young negroes, but ever conducting herself with great dignity and a subdued gaiety befitting her position as first lady of the province. There were times, however, when she would burst forth with sudden flashes of lawlessness, and make reckless

speeches, but they seemed only the effervescence of youth, and Sir William would but laugh at them as my lady sat at his knee before the wood fire of an evening after the supper.

I remember one such occasion, which may expound what I mean. We were in the great hall waiting for tea; and Lady Elinor, who regarded me in her talk no more than she would have done a stone image, was sitting on a low stool, twisting her hat round and round, for she had but recently come in. There was a warmth, a radiance, about this creature such as no bookishness can show. Suddenly she turned to Sir William, who was reading, and said:

"Do you believe in the Ten Commandments?"

There was a twinkle in Sir William's eyes as he answered:

"I believe in them for most people.

They are a very good thing for me, for instance."

"Oh, you!" returned my lady lightly, and I could but think with a bit of disdain, as if the exuberance of her nature cried out against the dryness of his, "*you* could keep twelve or fourteen just as well as ten, you are so good; but as for me—I find them a great drawback. Life might be a very tolerable thing if Moses had broken them once for all."

CHAPTER II

ONE morning in late May, in the second year after Sir William's marriage, the household was busily engaged in getting him ready for a trip to that part of Massachusetts which forms the present State of Maine, to which place he was going to inspect some fishing interests into which he had put a large sum of money. I had been hard at work with his letters until about eleven of the morning, when, thinking to get a breath of the spring air, I went down into the rose-garden. I had stopped to tie up a bush which the night wind had blown awry, when I saw my lady come out on the side veranda and look through the yellow haze of the sunshine to the place where I stood. Presently, humming to herself, with

a smile born of youth and absolute well-being, she came down the long path under the lilacs to the old bench, which was not ten feet from me. Whether it was that she was more than ordinarily beautiful, or because of an intensified consciousness on my part, which frequently comes to us before calamity, I can not say, but to this day I remember her as she stood in her pale-green gown and great hat, with the bunch of lilacs in her hand. It was in this same gown that the Lawrence portrait of her was afterward made, which my lord had directly in front of his bed, and died looking at. She seated herself on the old brown garden seat, and then, with her eyelids drawn together and her eyes brimming over with merriment, she said, drolling with me:

"You are a lazy old gentleman, Mr. Killduff."

I was but three years my lady's senior, and considered an industrious body.

"I have been hard at work since six this morning."

"Then you are dear Dr. Watts's 'busy bee,' and a constant reproof to idlers, which is worse than being lazy."

"You are gey and ill to please this morning, Lady Elinor," I answered.

"I am indeed. Sir William does not please me, because he is going away; you do not please me, because you work too hard; and the Latin and Greek, I find them boring me to death, and I feel that I should like some new interest in my life."

As I turned toward her I saw a man emerge from the trees around the boat-landing. It was at too great a distance from the lawn for me to see him distinctly, but, even at this distance, I noticed his nonchalant walk as he came nearer and nearer, whistling "Prince Charlie" between his teeth. I found him to be a gentleman of about my own years, yet appearing, from

the surety of his manner, and the bigness of his body, and still more from the warmth of his eye, which seemed to have been lit at the very Fire of Life itself, to be twice my years. He was a handsome man, dark, with an olive skin, sultry gray eyes, and thick brown hair ; his clothes were of black, but elegant both as to material and finish, his laces were of great fineness, and he carried in his manner, which was one of singular distinction, the atmosphere of a man who sticks at little in the attainment of his desires. In the first second our glances struck cold like steel and fell apart.

"Can you tell me where Madame Du——"

As he spoke, Lady Elinor, who had arisen, turned toward him. He had stood, as he addressed me, with his hat cocked on the back of his head and his hands in his pockets ; but when he saw her his sentence broke and his hand went to his head, he

uncovered, and I saw him swallow hard, as a man does in great joy or great sorrow; as for my lady, it seemed as if, even from the first look, her soul recognised him in some way, for the scarlet flowed into her cheeks, and their eyes clung to each other.

From the awkward pause which followed this meeting it was Lady Elinor who recovered herself first.

"We see you are a stranger in these parts," she said with great gentleness. "Is there any help we can offer you?"

"You can allow me to introduce myself," the stranger answered, with one of those radiant smiles which are so often the gift of very bad-tempered people. "My name is Harry Bedford, and I have messages from England of some note for Mistress Dulany, who——" He hesitated for a minute, and my lady finished for him.

"Lives on the hill yonder, where Mr. Killduff will escort you with pleasure, I

make sure"; and thus dismissing us both, she reseated herself, and left me to show the stranger the way to the foot-bridge.

As we wound our way down the wavering path, which often lost itself amid the tall grasses, the man resumed his whistling of "Prince Charlie," and put his hands in his pockets again with an entire disregard of me, which I felt arose from an intense preoccupation, rather than from any intentional discourtesy; he spoke never a word the whole way, nor in any manner, save by following my footsteps, gave proof that he knew of my existence. It was not above five minutes from the time I left him at Madame Dulany's door until I was back on the lawn. My lady was sitting with her hand over her eyes, and she started at the sound of my step as though it had been a cartridge exploded; the colour faded from her face as a light goes out suddenly, and without a word she arose and went

toward the house; nor did I see her again until the afternoon, when, leaning on Sir William's arm, she accompanied him to the boat-landing to bid him farewell.

"I had rather remain at Deepdeen than go to Ingleside," my lady said to Sir William.

"Dear," he answered, "I would not know one comfortable moment while I was away, to think of you alone in that great house with none but the servants. It will not be for long." And my lady was persuaded, and that evening, as the crows were flying down the stream and the purples of the night were gathering in the east, Lady Elinor and Madame Rochon, her waiting-woman, the young Sambo and I, arrived at Madame Dulany's doors. Here we were met by Mistress Randolph, who pressed me, in Madame Dulany's name, to remain and have supper with them, saying that some company had but to-day arrived

from England, and that there was to be a festivity. I glanced quickly at Lady Elinor, but her eyes were downcast, and it was impossible to tell her thought, and she quickly withdrew to her old rooms with her tiring-woman.

There being none to talk to, I wandered out into the grounds and remained above an hour, brooding on a trouble which was so vague as to be nameless. As I returned to the house, I remember that the big May moon was showing half her yellow face over the eastern hills, and the whip-poor-wills were piping in the dusky wood; then, too, I heard the strumming of banjos, upon which the blacks have ever displayed a singular proficiency.

Oh, love and youth and music!—and the mating season, and Nature's heyday in the blood, and old Virginia, with irresponsibility rampant in the summer air!

The great hall doors were open, on ac-

count of the summer heat, as I came up the walk, and standing in the hall were two gentlemen and Madame Dulany. One of the guests I recognised as our visitor of the morning, but, before I could see the other, the whole three turned their backs to me, and my gaze following theirs, I saw Lady Elinor coming down the stairs, a vision of loveliness. She wore a regal gown of white brocade and many jewels (Sir William, as well as her mother, being most lavish with her in this respect), and I wondered at the darkness and brightness of her eyes. She was beautiful past belief, and as I noticed the reckless way in which the stranger regarded her, I could but wish Sir William had neglected his fishing interests and had remained at home to look after his wife. Standing there all unnoticed, I registered a vow, which Heaven will bear witness how well I have kept, that, come good or ill, my whole life should be devoted

to this fair woman, who valued me no more than she did the spaniel who ran at her feet.

What with the brocade and the jewels, and the regal way she had of carrying herself, even her mother stood a bit awed, I thought, as she made the presentations.

It was then I heard the strangers' names—Lord Bedford and Sir Alan Mackenzie—the last named being above thirty, badly pitted with small-pox, with an uncanny droop to the right eye, but with such assurance of manner and ready conversation, I found afterward, as to make him a most agreeable companion.

Lord Bedford had changed his attire of the morning for a court suit of black satin; he wore the order of the garter and a star, set with diamonds, on his breast. There was a wonderful braveness of bearing about him, which recalled to my mind a saying of the Prince of Wales that he kept Bed-

ford around Carlton House as one of the decorations. There were, besides, invited for the supper, Father Spofford, a clergyman of the village, to whom madame, in her spasmodic attacks of religion, would turn with great fervour, his wife, Judge Fairfax, and the Stanley-Masons, who were visiting at the time.

At supper the talk turned on the voyage of the two gentlemen, which had been one of great danger, the ship having sustained such injuries that she was laid up in port for repairs. From this the conversation turned to adventure, and Lord Bedford, who was a great traveller, told of the troublous times in France with such skill in narration that we held our breath at the horrors. He had met General Bonaparte two years before this time, and spoke of him as the most wonderful man in the world, and the greatest menace to the French Republic, saying so many wise and

witty things of France that I marvelled after, that a man who had such vision for a nation had not more head for his own private affairs.

I had often marked my lady's conduct at such of the gatherings to which I was bidden, and never before, although she was always the centre of attraction, had I seen her so verily bewitching. Between her and Lord Bedford there was from the first one of those affinities of nature which make spoken language little needed, and through the supper this became ever and ever more apparent. He seemed to know her thought before it was spoken; was conscious of her movements when not looking at her; and once, when talking to Mistress Spofford, with his face away from Lady Elinor, turned to unfasten a piece of lace which had caught in one of her rings, with a certain assumption of the right to do it which made me glow with anger.

When the wine was brought in, madame bade the gentlemen call a toast, and Sir Alan named the king, but Lord Harry laughed back :

"Nay, Alan, you forget Mr. Washington ! I propose one instead, with your pardoning, which we can all drink with the best hearts in the world !" and, rising, he called, "To the Queen !" and pledged Lady Elinor, looking into her eyes meanwhile with unfettered admiration, afterward draining the wine to the very bottom of the glass.

At the close of the repast, the evening being still warm and balmy, it was proposed by Madame Dulany that we should go out on the balcony and have some of the blacks around to sing for us. The shadows lay thick and heavy from the very brightness of the moon. Most of the guests had gathered round Sir Alan, who was telling some wonderful tales of the

doings of the Prince of Wales and Mr. Fox; but Lady Elinor sat in a low chair by the railing, the light on her fair face and soft hair, and gleaming in the many jewels which she wore. Lord Bedford walked up and down restlessly for a little while, as if trying to keep away from her, I thought, but in the end yielding and seating himself on the railing very near to her, with his back leaning against one of the columns; and as he came I saw that she looked up at him and smiled.

"I make sure, Lady Elinor," Lord Bedford said in a softened voice, "that we have met somewhere before. Do you not feel it so?"

"It is scarcely possible," Lady Elinor answered. "I have lived in many countries, but I've never been in England."

"Never been in England!" Lord Bedford echoed in seeming amazement. "We must have you at the court before long";

and then, as with a sudden recollecting, "I remember now that I was told, before I came over, that you had never been in England."

"You were told this before you came over!" and it was now my lady's turn for wonderment. "Have I then some unknown friend in England who mentions my deficiencies?"

"Nay," he answered, "I make sure you would have no deficiencies in his eyes. The information I had from a friend of your mother's, whom I am fortunate enough to claim as mine; one whose name I am not at liberty to call. All of which," he said, with a veering, "has led us something away from the talk of our first meeting. In India, you know, there are people who believe that we have lived on earth many times before; that now and then it is given to some to have a recognition of those friends of Other Times. Who can

say how well we may have known each other then!"

"We look so much alike now that I doubt we may have been brother and sister then," and she smiled evidently at the dissimilarity between them.

"Nay," my lord answered—and his eyes softened and warmed toward her—"nay, I make sure not that." And even I, who was so little skilled in the arts of love, knew what his glance suggested; and my lady, when she spoke, answered the look rather than the words, for she put her hand with a quick gesture over her heart, looking up into the eyes which were drinking her in.

"Perhaps," she said, and again, after a moment, "perhaps."

I was on the steps below them, with a curious fancy in my heart of sitting quietly by and watching a fire kindled to burn Deepdeen to the ground, and yet doing nothing to prevent it, but just staring like

a gaby as the flames rose higher and higher. The picture was not a soothing one to my mind.

It was while we were thus waiting for the blacks to assemble that Mistress Randolph left the group at the other end of the porch and came and sat beside me on the lower steps. As I have said before, she had in general a great gift at silence, and it is God's mercy that she had, else she might have ended her days suddenly. She had a way of beginning a conversation with pronouns and avoiding proper names, as though it were sinful to use them; the exasperation of this driving a man's mind into a kind of frenzy, during which he could not, in justice, be held accountable for a rash act.

As may well be judged, with the trouble brewing, and the sick jealousy I had in my heart, I was in no mood for intercourse with her, and as she seated herself near me,

had I been but a grain less civilized I should have shown a clean pair of heels for the far woods.

"It would have been better," she observed, with a downward inflection of the voice, but with no stopping; "she said this morning as soon as she saw him how well they looked together not but that the other does very well though tedious and getting bald and no stomach for his food, and the other might have a terrible temper which he surely looks although appearances are deceitful, when will he be coming back for she is young and very handsome and those who should understand her do not and it would be a pity!"

I clinched my teeth and made no reply, but through a mist of pronouns I gathered that Mistress Randolph saw a great deal, with those sleepy eyes, which keener ones were missing.

There were perhaps a dozen of the

colored people gathered on the moonlit lawn, and after arranging themselves in a semicircle, one (and I remember hearing soon after that she had just lost her husband by reason of his being sold into the rice swamps of Carolina) advanced into the middle and began a wild kind of chant, swaying to and fro as she sang, the others coming in on the refrain. The singer, a woman of thirty, perhaps, wore a gay-coloured handkerchief around her head and large hoops of brass in her ears, which set off her yellow countenance in such a theatric manner that Lord Bedford regarded her as one does a character in a play, and at the song's conclusion applauded with great vehemence, throwing some pieces of money down to her, and exclaiming enthusiastically, "By Saint George, Alan, this is a country to live in!"

It was after several more such songs, when the blacks had retired, that Sir Alan

said: "Harry, why don't you sing us a song yourself? It's none so bad—your music."

"And I thank you for the fulsome flattery with which you introduce my performance," responded Lord Bedford, with a laugh, though I thought that, although he treated the thing so lightly, he was main glad of the invitation. Upon being urged by the ladies, he asked for a guitar. Reseating himself on the rail, he began touching the strings caressingly with that indescribable affection which a musician seems to feel for any music-producing thing. Then in a barytone voice of great sweetness, to which the presence of my lady and his own feelings lent warmth, he sang:

"Love is the perfect sum
Of all delight;
I have no other choice,
Either for pen or voice,
To sing or write.

"O Love, they wrong thee much
Who say thy sweet is bitter,
When thy rich fruit is such
That nothing can be sweeter.

"Fair house of joy and bliss,
Where truest pleasure is,
I do adore thee.
I know thee what thou art,
I serve thee with my heart,
And fall before thee."

It was thus Romeo might have sung in one of Verona's white moonlit nights, had he not been afraid of drawing the whole Capulet family about his ears. It was poetry and youth and passion, but something worse, for the voice had in it the assertion of an individual claim against all law and the rights of others. Upon being loudly commended, Lord Bedford sang again, this time from the Master, a tune which I judged he had learned in Spain, for it had in it the lilt of the serenade:

"O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
Oh stay and hear your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low;

Trip no farther, pretty sweeting,
Journeys end in lovers meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.

"What is love?—'tis not hereafter,
Present mirth has present laughter.
What's to come is still unsure;
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come, kiss me, sweet and twenty—
Youth 's a stuff will not endure."

After the music nothing would do madame but that there should be a little dancing, and Mistress Randolph, who played in a very sprightly manner on the pianoforte, was called, and Madame Dulany and Father Spofford, Mistress Spofford and Sir Alan, and my lady and Lord Harry, walked through a minuet—the last two, it seemed to me, in such an intimacy of thought as to be regardless that the others were present.

It was but soon after that the guests withdrew; and as my lady said from the bottom of the steps:

"Good-night. Pleasant dreams, my

lord," I heard him respond almost in a whisper, as he kissed her hand :

"If I dream what I would, I pray to sleep forever."

I remember these words well. I was to hear them again in the bitterest moment of my life.

CHAPTER III

THE next morning the wind had veered to the east, bringing with it a persistent rain, which joined the heavens by fine straight lines to the earth beneath. About ten o'clock I walked over to the Dulany house to take my lady's orders for the day, where I found the two gentlemen daffing together in the great hall before the fire, which had been found necessary by the morning's chill. Sir Alan greeted me most condescendingly, with some show of pleasure at sight of me, but Lord Bedford gave me a careless "Good-morning," yawned in my very face, and treated me frankly as a person of no moment. Finding that Lady Elinor had not yet arisen, or at least had

not yet descended, I withdrew into the library to wait. While I was there, Lord Harry, with a guitar in his hand, came to the foot of the stairs and sang, for he had an excellent gift at improvisation :

"O Elinor, my lady, shine forth in your beauty,
The skies all are weeping for heaven's lost blue;
And to show us your radiance is only a duty,
For the sun's hid her face because jealous of you."

I but mention the incident to show the intimacy with which this time proceeded. For my lady and Lord Harry it was indeed constant companionship, which fell not alone by reason of the strong attraction each felt for the other, but by dint of the following circumstances: The first was the riding away of Sir Alan to visit some of his American kinsfolk in Williamsburg; and the second, the falling ill of Madame Dulany, who seized this most inopportune time for one of those attacks to which she was a victim, requiring the seclusion of her

own rooms and the constant attendance of Mistress Randolph.

It so fell that many days were spent by Lady Elinor and Lord Bedford under the beeches, by the brook, or rowing along the river banks in an intimacy which seemed to me to be playing indeed very close to the fire. There was one fair day in early June that they had been in the apple orchard together; and my lady, having torn a rent in her gown, was for withdrawing to have it repaired, or to exchange it for another.

"Don't go," my lord said to her, pleading with real humbleness, "don't go—I can not spare you so long away from me.' The scarlet came into her face, and I thought for a minute she would leave him in anger, though in the end she did but sit down beside him on the garden seat, saying it was no great matter, and could easily go till dressing time.

There was that done in those short five weeks which many were forced to repent for all time. There was no excusing possible for Lord Bedford, to my way of thinking, for he was a man of the world who knew the force of his conduct; but for my lady much might be said—her great beauty and charm bringing near her temptations which most women never know, while behind her (as shall fall to be known) was a heredity of entire lawlessness, such as few natures have ever to contend with. Had she been allowed, however, to follow her nature's leading instead of yielding to her mother's wishes, she would have been able to give herself lawfully where her heart had found its master. It was at the close of June, Sir William having been absent then about five weeks, that we were in the grounds till late in the evening, where Mistress Randolph had sent us out a great dish of new-picked

HENRY FRANCIS ST MARTIN
SIXTH LORD BEDFORD

cherries. Lady Elinor and Lord Bedford were standing close together, and I saw—for I watched them ever with eyes full of love for my lady and loyalty to Sir William—that she reached him a cherry, that he threw his head a little back as though waiting her to put it to his lips, that a glance passed between them, and in another second his arms were around her and their lips clung together. It was insanity, apart from its being a great wrong, for there was but the tree's trunk between them and the rest; but I think, before Heaven, had they been in a crowded drawing-room it would have been the same.

I walked home that night with my head on my breast. It was of Elinor Grafton, I thought; it was of Elinor Grafton I was always thinking, and shall be when the light of this world fades before my dying eyes, and the light of a better one,

please God, shall dawn before my re-awakened spirit.

I sat late and restless in the reading-room that night, miserable in mind, and feeling as one who has betrayed a trust unwittingly, when I heard a low tap at the window, and there on the outside stood my lady, all in white, with a long cloak about her, and pale as one dead. I arose, mechanically, to let her in.

"Robin," she said, with her hands clasped before her and a wild look in her beautiful eyes (it was the first time she had ever called me by the given name), "I want very much to come back to my own home. I want that there shall be some good excuse to give forth why I shall come. I want——" and with this she sat down beside the heavy oak table, in Sir William's own chair, the sight of which, I think, had touched her with the memory of her absent lord, and fell into such a

storm of weeping as drove me almost daft with pain, and yet gave me a kind of rejoicing, too, that all was not so bad, and that my lady might yet be saved.

I tried to make what comfort of mind I could for her, telling her that there was no need of returning to her mother's house at all; saying that it could be easily given forth that Sir William had apprised me by packet of his return (which was true), and that she had chosen to come back with me to have the house set in order.

"It would not do," she returned; "for the look of things I must go back, but come you early in the morning. I shall be ready to return with you." Rising and drying her eyes, she said, most abruptly: "I know all about you, Robin—of the poor bedridden father, who lives among the Scottish heather, to whom you send the bulk of your earnings; of the blacks you teach; of the simple faith which makes

you thank God for the lot he has given you, that many would receive with scant gratitude. I know all, and it makes me trust you. Believe me, there is none in all the world whom I trust more—you are so good."

My heart felt as if it would break with joy, and, as she turned away, she said, as simply and earnestly as a little child might have done, "I want to be good and true, too, Robin."

CHAPTER IV

It fell easily, as we had planned, and the next morning, leaving farewells for the gentlemen and a note for her mother, she accompanied me home before the Dulany household was yet astir, and went directly to her rooms. It was more than a week—I think, to be accurate, it was the ninth day—before she was able to descend again, being seized with a fever which, after raging for a time, would leave her to shake with cold and the teeth to chatter in her head.

All this time Lord Bedford did but scour the country, racing the horses till they were covered with foam and lather, and gathering a main bad name for a hard rider through the country-side. The

man looked haggard, and wild, and unhappy. There was still no talk of his leaving, though I waited with ears of impatience to hear the first rumours of his departure; Sir Alan, I knew, was anxious to be off, and the ship had been repaired and ready to sail any time for a fortnight back.

It was during this time that Madame Dulany's affairs became clearer to my understanding. I was sitting one day, drowsing over some accounts, when I suddenly bethought me of the fact that Lord Bedford was next in succession to the Marquis of Sefton, he having no direct issue and being aged; and I fell to wondering who was the personage so great as to be able to send one of the first gentlemen of Europe across the seas on an errand to a private lady. Surely none but royalty itself, I thought; and then, as Lord Harry's intimacy with the Prince of Wales was re-

called to me, the conduct of Madame Dulany, when the wrongs of women were mentioned, I can not affirm that I reasoned, but there came such a strong suspicion that later, when the truth was broke to me, it came rather as corroboration of news than as news itself.

The first time that Lady Elinor was down, sitting for greater comfort on the veranda, as the day was sultry, Lord Bedford crossed the foot-bridge and came up the path which, but seven weeks before, he had trod so gaily. His face was drawn and very pale as he ascended the steps into my lady's presence. What was said in the long interview that followed I can not, of course, set down; but twice I saw her rise as though she would leave him, and at the end of it he went away without entering the house; and his countenance, as he went, was that of one who has been faced with death.

The next morning it was given out that the two gentlemen would be leaving on the following day, and two letters passed between Lady Elinor and Lord Harry, both of which I carried. It was at a much later date that the journal itself and the two letters, which I set below, came into my possession in a manner which I will hereafter make known.

From Elinor Grafton to Henry, Lord Bedford

"I write to you trustingly, as I know I may, lovingly, as I know I should not, to ask you to go away without seeing me again. We have been foolish, but I believe nothing worse, and I would that you might ever think of me as one who had the desire to be good and faithful to the trusts her life had given her. Life can never seem the same again, but I will not—nay, I can not—hurt a human thing that trusts me. I can feel, even in my despair,

that there is more to life than personal inclination, and see, although but blindly, through the mists, that it is better to sacrifice myself for truth and honour than even to have your love. Oh, go, while I have strength to let you go! When I remember——"

Here the letter is torn off. Thus it was when it came into my possession.

From Henry Bedford to Lady Elinor Grafton

"DEAREST: I am going away, as you tell me to do. The fault has all been mine; I would that all the suffering might be mine as well. Will you always remember that the love I have for you is as pure and high as a man can give a woman, and such that, were you free, would make you my wife to-day? Believe me when I say that it makes a better man of me, and most of all, believe that I would not forego

the pain of it if it included forgetting Thee.

"I try hard to think of the rights of that other one; but, oh, Beloved, have we no rights? If I were he, and you loved another as—I may write it once, may I not, just to feel my heart beat louder while I write it?—as you love me, I should demand no sacrifice of you like this. You judge differently, and you may be right. You speak of your love for your husband, and I read it with no jealousy, knowing its kind, and admiring to the full the loyal heart that gives it.

"You have given me no alternative save to go. God bless you, Elinor, now and always, and in the drear days to come for both of us, remember that there is one—your slave, your husband that should have been, who is till death, and even to that far beyond, Thine,

"BEDFORD."

All the next day my lady walked restlessly about the house, never seeming to content herself anywhere, and appearing ever to have a feverish anxiety to be occupied.

There was a box of new books came that morning, and she ordered it opened immediately for her inspection, laying all, save one, aside as being of little moment. It was this one that she held, her finger marking the place where she was reading, as she came down the long hall after supper to the bench where I sat smoking.

"Robin," she said, "will you give me your arm to the laurel seat? I make sure I can walk so far."

Laying aside my pipe, I arose with much pleasure, and together we walked through the early gloaming, over the sun-scorched grass. It was evident that Lady Elinor's mind was neither with me nor with her book, yet, with the admirable

breeding she ever displayed, she endeavoured to conceal her mood, nor in any way to admit me to the privacy of her feelings.

"It is a great man, this Burns," she said, looking down at the book. "You of Scotland should be proud of him."

I laughed aloud at some remembrance, and my lady questioned me with her eyes.

"I fitted for the university," I hastened to explain, "with an uncle who lives in Edinburgh, and there fell much with this same Robert. My uncle, an uncommon learned but narrow man, could never account for the infatuation so many, myself among them, felt for Burns's society. One day a gentleman urged Robert's cleverness upon my uncle, who responded grimly: 'It's all very well, writing doggerel about lice and other vermin, but cleverness has nothing at all to do with it. A man either is or is not a gentleman. Bobby Burns is not a gentleman.'"

"What a heresy!" my lady said, smiling a little, but with a watch kept constantly on the rise, at the turn of the road, which lay between us and the Dulany house. I threw myself at her feet in the grass and watched the day's ending. There was a sunlit ribbon around the west. I saw it fade, and the midsummer moon grow large and full, and yet she neither spoke nor stirred.

Suddenly the hounds, over the hill, began to bay; then, with a sweep and a dash, a blowing of horns and hallooing, a party of riders came up the turn in the road. I saw—we both saw—Lord Bedford check his horse for a moment, and with the light full in his face and with a grace of movement such as I have never seen in any other, wave his hand toward Deepdeen; then, with another halloo, the party disappeared round the turn.

Lady Elinor started to her feet, and I

made sure at first that she would call to him. She only stood still, however, with her hands clenched and her eyes dilated, as was her way whenever she suffered. She stood thus, her head thrust forward a little, listening until even the baying of the dogs could no longer be heard, when, throwing her hands wide apart, with her face turned back to the sky, she cried, " Harry ! " and dropped unconscious at my feet.

CHAPTER V

Of the year following Lord Bedford's departure there is little to write. We knew, at the first, that he did not return to England, but joined, at Norfolk, a party of adventurers in some fatuous expedition against the Indians of the far West. There was small doubt that the man hoped to ease an aching heart by excitement and the wild kind of travel into which he would be forced. Then a silence concerning him endured for some time, ere there came to us by way of Williamsburg a great concern for the explorers, nothing having been heard from them since the time of their setting forth. In February, however, the old Judge Fair-

fax came in upon us suddenly one afternoon, in a state of excitement bordering on a seizure, to tell us with horridness of detail of the butchery of the entire party by the Indians. Nothing was left to the imagination in the telling, Sir William (who knew Lord Bedford but by name) encouraging the narration needlessly, it seemed to me, for his own curiosity and entertainment. During the long afternoon and the dinner which followed, Lady Elinor sat quietly with us, nor did she by word or sign show that the news was of special purport to her. I marvelled at the splendid courage of this girl, and when I heard her walking back and forth in her room all night long, my heart bled for her in this sorrow, which I knew would be most nobly borne.

In the time immediately following this intelligence her condition was pathetic in the extreme. She was listless in her work,

more listless in her leisure, with a great growing upon her of her mother's habits of inattention and brooding. Sir William spoke several times to me of her pallor, her lack of spirits, and the seriousness of her, which he feared came from overwork on the books; and matters were at this stand in May, when Sir William was off for the North again, and my lady, very much against her will, was due to make some long-promised visits in the neighbouring towns.

One of these was to the Stanley-Masons, in Williamsburg, a house party in honour of the coming of age of their oldest son, having been projected for the first week in June. They had included me in this invitation, by reason of the fondness their boy, Michael, had conceived for me while visiting the year before at Deepdeen. The guests had been dancing the evening of our arrival, and about eleven the ladies

ascended to their rooms, leaving the men to smoke and drink a little more before retiring for the night. There had been some suggestions made of my brewing a bowl of punch to add to the sangaree, and merriment was at its highest, when it was announced that a party of adventurers, some of whom were friends of mine host, desired lodgment for the night.

They were ushered into the great dining-hall, and, as I looked at them, my amazed eyes rested on Lord Bedford, as the foremost of their number. He was so changed that, but for the grace of his manner and the warmth of his eye, I should not have recognised him. He appeared much older, his face hard and drawn and reckless. I never liked the man, but, as I looked, sorrow for him rose in my heart, and, advancing toward him, I welcomed him with a warmth which, but an hour before, I should have deemed impossible.

We sat at the board together, and, though he talked of his adventures and asked in a general way for the Deepdeen people, no mention was made directly of my lady; and when he told me they would all be off in the morning before daybreak, I thanked God and kept my tongue.

When the guests' rooms had been made ready, it fell to my share to escort Lord Bedford to his chamber, which was up another set of stairs from those in the main building. When I reached it, I found that, by some devil's chance, the room apportioned him was directly next to that of Lady Elinor, with a door between. I was staying for a few last words, when a sound of gay questioning came to our ears, and immediately my lady's voice was distinctly heard in answer.

Lord Bedford was holding a riding-crop in his hand, and at the sound he dropped it, and his face went ashy pale, but he

made no comment, and soon after bade me a most hearty good-night.

The next hours were full of fear and unrest. About one, sleep being impossible, I arose and picked up a volume of some German poetry, intending to read something to pass the weary time. Opening the book at random, my eye lighted on these ill-omened words:

"Far in the distance sang a nightingale, *and one star, the loveliest of all, fell adown from heaven.*"

It seems as if it were impossible for me to set down what I desire should here follow—this extract from my lady's journal.

I finger lovingly the worn cover to this story of a great love, and hesitate still. None can chide me more than I do myself for lack of delicacy and reserve in setting it below. I have pondered long as to whether it would not be better for me to tell the tale in my own rough way,

but in the end have deemed it best, as bringing the clearest understanding of her, to let one of the truest women who ever made mistakes for love and passion speak in her own words, as she wrote them three weeks later, after our return to Deepdeen.

From My Lady's Journal

"It was after one of the dreariest evenings of my life that I retired to my rooms earlier than usual, by reason of a hunting party which was to be in the morning, upon which my heart was a little set. I was made ready for retiring, and Josephine had left me for the night. I had slept, perhaps, but a quarter of an hour, when there came clamouring to my door some voices to tell me what time we should set forth. I answered them and they went away—when, suddenly, through my brain, my soul rather, came a consciousness of a great light—a great lifting—ah! there are

no words in all language to tell this feeling that possessed me, for it seemed as though to me, who had been dead so long, life came back at the fullest flood of tide. All this came to me, I swear, from no outside sound, for it was a full minute later, as we count time, when, from the door to the adjoining apartment, came a sound of singing—a lilt, with a bluebird's call at the end—which my heart leaped for joy at sound of.

"There was but one other in all this wide world who knew it, for we had made it together, in one of God's own days, in the apple orchard at Deepdeen, two years before.

"I reached in the dim light for a dressing-gown, and in that tense, passionate silence, with my heart rapping on the walls of my body and a tightness as of pain gathering at my throat, went to the door of the adjoining room. Putting my ear close to it, I

listened. I knew, even before the low rap came, that he was there; and at the second, which came directly against my heart itself, I drew the bolt and threw the door wide open. In another moment he had thrown himself at my feet, sobbing great sobs which seemed to tear his very frame. There was much change in him; his face was drawn and thin, but his eyes were still the same, and the Marriage Look passed between us, the meaning of Life was clear, and Right and Wrong and duties to others, and all that was and is, and ever shall be, became as nothing beside the man my heart had chosen for its own."

CHAPTER VI

The next morning the rain fell in torrents, so that none could stir abroad. Lord Bedford and his party were prevailed on to remain, and, the horrid weather continuing, it was not until the end of the fourth day that the roads were considered passable. During all this time my lady kept her room, it being given forth that she was suffering from some illness.

There was little of the day that I was far away from Lord Bedford, the whole party being kept indoors and diverting themselves by tales of the adventurers, to which the ladies especially listened with breathless interest.

Of him I could gain nothing, however,

the very lawlessness of his career having wrought such experiences around him as to give him a great power of dissimulation when he found it expedient. He left with me, at his departure, the deepest regrets at not having seen my lady, and begged me to assure her of his devoted remembrance.

His manner was so frank that I became ashamed of my suspicions, and fell to pondering that very afternoon on the probable foolishness of my anxiety and the number of times I had misjudged others. I was thus engaged, the matter still sticking hard in my mind, when Lady Elinor came upon me in the billiard-room.

Her eyes fell as they encountered mine. She was dressed in white, like a bride, and there was an excited joyousness in her manner, a radiance of bearing, such as I had never seen. I marvelled much at this. It was corroboration of none of my thoughts. Surely no woman could look

so who had just lost a lover, and yet no woman like Lady Elinor, methought, could appear like this who had just unlawfully gained one.

It was gone a full fortnight before Sir William returned, tanned and rugged-looking, in high good spirits at the success of his enterprise, and in being once more united to his beloved wife. Almost immediately we returned to Deepdeen, and it was the second day of our arrival that I learned some news which I could but think had come from Lady Elinor's wish—that the house was soon to be closed, and she taken to England, with which country she was unfamiliar, where she might meet the members of her husband's family for the first time.

She did nothing but make merry over the plan ; and one day, while she was chattering gaily with Sir William, her mother, who had grown to be more and more of a

recluse, so that it was a most unusual thing for her to do, came in to the large hall and joined the tea-drinking party. She looked even more anxious than was her wont, and, after the rest of us had gone out on the lawn, sat for a long time closeted with Sir William; when he called me to him some little time later I could see that she had been crying. It was some letters he wanted from an adjoining room, for he had gradually fallen into the management of all of Mistress Dulany's affairs, and while I was searching for them I heard her say:

"You spoil her, Sir William. She is too much of a child to know what she wants; but if you love her and wish to shield her, keep her out of England."

I thought at the time that Mistress Dulany had suspected what was known to me and wondered at her speaking thus-wise to Sir William, but I found later it

was of quite a different matter she was thinking.

Then fell a period of indecision on the family; for two or three months I could make nothing of their movements, Lady Elinor acting like a creature that was above human responsibility, and Sir William regarding her with looks akin to worship. One day, late in September, it was given out, however, that the journey was indefinitely postponed, and that the Virginia house would be kept open through the winter.

It was impossible by circumstances for me to be kept much longer in ignorance of the cause of all this variability, and I fell in with the family anxiety, which lasted till thirteenth of February, 1801.

I remember well the time. The day had been gray and lowering, with a fierce wind blowing in from the east; a light snow had fallen the night before and had

been frozen in over the gray boughs of the trees.

All day long Lady Elinor had tossed in bed with a burning fever, and hoarse and delirious cries. Just at nightfall a furious tempest broke, snow and hail and wind blowing around the house, the ice on the tree limbs crackling and being hurled like bullets against the window-panes, adding to the paroxysm of disorder out of doors. It was on toward eleven of the evening, little hope being then given that she would live, when, in a lull of the storm, I was asked to go over to Madame Dulany's house for some necessaries. Running to one of the outhouses for a lantern, I became aware of a man standing just inside the door. I was so distraught with grief and anxiety that nothing seemed unusual, and fear was far from me; my throat was choked with sobs, but as plainly as I could speak I asked him what he did. There

was no answer for a minute, and then, throwing back the hood he wore, the man turned his full face toward me. It was Henry Bedford.

It seemed as if, in this moment, all dissimulation dropped from us both, and our naked souls regarded each other. He essayed to speak twice before he was able to utter a sound, but finally asked, "How is she?"

"No better," I answered; "the doctors have told Sir William to expect the worst."

"Sir William!" he cried out, "Sir William! What is it to him? It is I—I who should be there. She is my wife—mine before Heaven!" and he made as though he would burst into the house.

"Listen!" I said, holding him back. "She would not know you; but stay you here, and I will come as often as I can and tell you how she fares."

The hut in which he was sheltered was

but the merest shell of a place, where garden tools and such things were kept; the floor this night was but a bed of frozen mud, and the wind roared through the open chinks between the boards. I left the distraught man standing just inside the door, as I had found him, and hastened on my errand.

On my return from the Dulany house with the articles Madame Dulany had required, I went into the library. Sir William was sitting by the reading-table; his neckcloth had become disarranged; what could be seen of his face, for he had covered his eyes with both hands, was ashen pale. Father Spofford was there, but when he came to Sir William as though he would speak, he was motioned away, as by one who could bear no words.

As I withdrew into the hall, Father Spofford followed me.

"There is some change?" I inquired.

"There is no change," and then in a whisper, so that Sir William could not hear, "Dr. Prout says she will die within the hour."

There has come to me in my life much grief and sorrow, but the suffering of it all, ten times told, would not be so great as what I endured in that moment. Something like a hand of burning iron seized my chest, my thoughts whirled as in a delirium, and my knees went from under me so that I tottered, and, but for Father Spofford, would have fallen.

"Come, come, Robin, man," he said, "you must not give way like this. Come with me."

Entering the dining-room, he poured out a glass of brandy, which with great difficulty I swallowed, and with this there came the remembrance of the other poor wretch in the grounds. Hastily bundling up some rugs and a bottle of spirits, I

staggered forth, the household so distracted by the dreadful calamity and the horridness of the storm that none wondered. As I neared the hut the man came toward me from the door.

"How is it?" he asked, clutching me by the coat-sleeve as I met him.

I could not speak. In the dim light of the lantern he saw the ill news in my face.

"There is no hope? Speak, man; for God's sake, speak!"

"None," I answered.

He stood perfectly still for a few minutes, and then, with an awful sound, as of dissolution, fell at my feet.

Thought for his care overcame my greater grief, for the moment at least. There was a rough kind of trellis, which had been used for vines, stood up against the wall, and turning this over, I put the rugs on it, and made what kind of comfort

I could for him, forcing the brandy, which I had brought, between his clenched teeth ; but he still lay like death. Opening his clothes to feel his heart, fearing, with a kind of jealousy, too, that perhaps his soul and hers would go away together, I found his shirt covered with blood. He had sustained a horrid gash under the shoulder-blade, and the wound was bleeding still.

It was a nasty place to dress such a hurt, but, with what skill I could, I essayed the attempt, and was rewarded, in a little while, by seeing the man open his eyes. I administered more brandy to him, and he was soon enough recovered to stand upon his feet and to totter over to the door, from which place he could see the lights in my lady's room and the shadows as they passed to and fro on the blinds.

He on one side of the door and I on the other, we stood and listened. Sud-

denly, above the storm, there came a cry that rent the night in twain.

"Wait!" I cried, and ran to the house. Sir William had clapped his hands over his ears at the sound of it, and it was thus the doctor found him when he entered, several minutes after, with better countenance than he had yet worn.

"I congratulate you, Sir William, on your son; he is well and strong." Sir William never noticed this.

"How is she?" he asked.

"She is conscious, and there is every hope now that she may recover."

I could but think of the man who was waiting the news, and yet the feeling of sympathy with him, which had been strong but so recent, passed in a minute, and my old, fierce, jealous hate of him returned, even as I ran to bear him the tidings.

He told me, when he was able, that he had set sail from England three months pre-

vious, but, the passage being stormy and the ship blown out of her course, he had arrived at Richmond but the night before; the river being frozen and the ordinary traffic stayed, he had taken horse and ridden alone up the river road.

"It is best for every one," I said, "that you should give forth some important business to Madame Dulany as your errand here. Go over to the house, appear to know naught in the morning of what has happened to-night, and I will see that Dr. Prout is sent to you as soon as he can be spared."

He noticed with no resentment the change in my manner toward him, and, setting forth, was soon lost in the darkness.

CHAPTER VII

It was late in March before my lady was able to be about. I had seen neither her nor the child until one morning in the latter part of the month, when she came through the great hall with the baby on her arm. She seemed the very incarnation of motherhood. There was a softness of expression about her which I had never seen before, as though her pride and restlessness had died at this new creature's birth.

I arose from the writing-table as she entered, but for the life within me I could not have spoken. She walked toward me, and the mite's head was cuddled up to her cheek, while she bent over it with that

caressing way of mothers. It was after we had been seated some time and I had, with lameness and stammering and a scarlet face, offered my congratulations, that Lord Bedford was announced, for he had stayed at Madame Dulany's all this time; the wound, which he had received by reason of an unlucky fall from his horse on some jagged rocks, having but recently healed. As my lady did not dismiss me, I withdrew to the great window at the lower part of the room and waited her orders.

Lord Bedford was very pale as he entered, but his face shone with a kind of inspiration, and he wore a smile which was both tender and joyous. My lady arose with a rapture on her fair, fond face, and, coming slowly forward, with her eyes fixed in his, laid the child in his arms. I saw a tremor go through his frame as he held the little thing near him, but no word was

spoken, and all this time they did but look at each other with eyes that were warm with content.

She gave me some work to do at the far desk, and she and Lord Bedford sat by the fire, and, though I could not hear the words, I knew that she was recounting something, and the little ejaculations Lord Bedford made from time to time were those of sympathy.

"And what is the boy to be named?" he asked presently; and clearly, although her voice was dropped, my lady made answer:

"If I had my way, 'twould be Henry Francis St. Martin, seventh Lord of Bedford; but that being impossible, I shall call him after my other king, George Frederick Augustus, king by the grace of God."

"Sweetheart," he answered, "if we are true there will come a time when he may

bear both my name and title, if there is a law in Great Britain can be made to fit. And look you, beautifulest woman of all time, swear to me, with your hand on the baby's head, that if ever there comes a time when it is possible, you will marry me and stand my wife before men, as you now are before God!"

I saw my lady pale suddenly, and then, with a superbness of gesture which made her ever stand apart from others, she laid her hand on the baby's brow as though it were the Holy Book, and solemnly said, "I swear!"

I do but set this down to show the unusualness of this love, which seemed to have in it the respect and dignity that come from the marriage tie.

It was the next morning after this that there came to me a recognition of the keenness of my lady's mind—the mind which Goethe, later in life, pronounced the

finest he had ever known in woman. She had been reading from an old Shakespeare that she ever kept near her, when, looking up to Sir William, who was sitting by, gazing into the fire, she said :

" I am beginning to know, not through my conscience but through my intellect, the wisdom of being good. Shakespeare felt how heavily one has to pay for broken laws ; weakness and self-indulgence are too expensive to support. Look ! Othello, the jealous fool—pays ! Romeo, passion-drunk —pays ! Hamlet, wabbling milksop—pays ! I can not tell you how clearly I have grown to see that broken laws breed tragedy. It is logical. It is just."

She sat perfectly still for a minute, and then, throwing her hands wide apart, she cried twice, " It will come—it will come ! " and with this she burst into such a storm of weeping that my lord fell to comforting her ; and though, at tea time, she

seemed to have cheered herself some, she ever after held to this doctrine, and many times, in later life, I have heard her refer to this first intellectual comprehension of it.

CHAPTER VIII

For the next four years our lives ran uneventfully, my lady occupied with Master George, and Sir William interested in little that did not pertain to them.

It seemed as if the maternal passion gave my lady the balance which she needed; and though on the frequent visits of Lord Bedford to America he was much with her, I was convinced then, as I am now, that there was between them naught that the whole world might not have seen. There was one day when the proof of this came to me in words. They two were standing, looking down from a window at the little toddler, who, with his nurse, was at play on the green, when my lady turned

to Lord Bedford, with tears in her eyes, and said :

"For love's sake I have renounced love."

"You are an angel," he answered impassionedly, and then, with a grim little smile, "but it is hard on me."

For some time after the birth of Master George there were but two events of any moment to chronicle : one, the purchase of the Fairfax house, a large estate, about twelve miles from us, by Lord Bedford, where he purposed to spend part of every year for the hunting and fishing ; the other, the serious and at the time unaccountable seizure of the widow Dulany, which threw her into such a mortal illness that for weeks her life was despaired of.

It was in 1804 or 1805 that belated newspapers from England brought us intelligence of the accusation of the Prince

of Wales against his wife—charges which were easily disproved, and in which the future King of England showed to but ill advantage, according to my thinking. We were sitting discussing these affairs one evening, Sir William being extreme in bitterness against the prince, when Madame Dulany fell into such a haranguing of the unfortunate Princess Caroline, denouncing her as as an infamous German who had never really loved the prince, that the frenzy of denunciation caused her presently to fall a-weeping and then into a kind of stupor, which was the beginning of those seizures which finally ended her days.

All these years were a main bad time for Europe. Napoleon, the great pirate, was dashing madly from country to country, making and unmaking kings, chipping off a piece of a kingdom here and tacking it on there, swearing, bullying, dominating,

and acting as, I believe, no other mortal man has ever had the power to act since the world began.

It was about this time that the clash in the fishing interests of England and America began, which finally ended in the embargo. Sir William was highly flattered one day to receive a letter from no less a person than the great Pitt himself, asking that, as the one of all his Majesty's subjects most surely in possession of the knowledge, he should come to London under advisement, offering every inducement that he should follow the invitation. There was no Englishman in the States at the time who was better fitted to give the information which the Government required—Sir William's fortune having become enormous through the industries upon which knowledge was wanted, and then, too, there was another reason which led him forward, for Sir William's soul

was troubled at times for the land of his nativity.

It fell, therefore, that, leaving affairs in the hands of Mistress Randolph, the family, including Lady Elinor, Sir William, Master George, myself, and four maids, took passage from Norfolk by the good ship Virgin Queen, which sailed the eighteenth of November, 1805.

I had been absent from my native land nine years, and, as I stood and watched the autumn-reddened shores of the New World fade from me, it was with a sadness at the thought of the happy scenes I was leaving, I knew not for how long, and with a feeling of apprehension of those into which we were about to pass.

The day before we left, Mistress Dulany had called me to her, and when we were quite alone had handed me a packet which she had asked, with much earnestness, that I should deliver into the hands of her solicit-

ors, Messrs. Hobson and Hobson, in Great Threadneedle Street. She urged that this should be done immediately on our arrival, and that I should write direct to her of the packet's safe delivery. It was but a small burden, containing, I should judge, some few letters and a frame as of a miniature. I know not by what instinct I was guided, but, as I stood talking to Mistress Dulany for a few minutes after, I noted that a boyish miniature portrait of Prince George, which she ever wore, was absent from her throat for the first time in my knowledge since I had known her.

Of London, the London into which we came on the twenty-second day of January, 1806, it is hard to write. The prince had set the pace; balls, junketings, horse-racings, prize-fightings, with all other form of carousings, were going on at Carleton House, while the poor old doddering King George, with his obstinate intellect tottering, slept with

his sceptre between his teeth, to prevent the regency passing into the hands of his worthless son.

We had taken, by the advice of some of the gentlemen who for their own interests had been instrumental in bringing Sir William over, a very large house in Portman Square. My lady's thought being ever of Master George, the nurseries were fitted up first, and a German attendant secured for him, it being her plan that, like herself, her son should have all the modern tongues as a child. It remained ever a wonder to me that she could change from French to German, from Italian to Spanish, and back again to English, with no apparent break in her thought and with the ease of the mother tongue in all.

The house, which was dark and stuffy when we came, soon underwent such changes at her hands that none would have known it, and for a description of all these

changes, I think it best to let her speak for herself, as she did to her mother in her letter, dated and written as follows:

"PORTMAN SQUARE, LONDON,
"*April first, 1806.*

"OH, MOTHER MINE: Come up to Lunnon Town—and 'bind your hair and lace your bodice blue,' and learn the styles and have your youth again. You want to know just what I am doing, do you not, with all the little details so dear to the heart of woman?

"I sent you in my last letter the drawing of our house; it would have been impossible to send anything which would have adequately expressed the extreme dinginess and ill taste of the place, but we have changed all that.

"The Gentleman to whom I am Married, and, I should like to state, who is now the First Gentleman in Europe, having

told me to do exactly as I pleased, and get exactly what I wanted, and your own great generosity to your lawless child being remembered, I did launch myself forth into such expense that I have the distinction, after but two months' residence here, of being known to the tradespeople as the best customer in town.

"Mother dear! there is no taste in England except what is imported from France. With difficulty I succeeded in getting some French people to work for me, and I have had the three drawing-rooms downstairs hung in pale canary-coloured silk, panelled in roses—the ceilings in Cupids and clouds, after our old rooms in Spain, which I loved as a child, and as a woman, too, I may add.

"The hangings are in brocades of yellow and roses, to match the walls, and the furniture, of the same colour, was of Louis the Fifteenth's time, being some that I was

fortunate enough to procure at a sale of the effects of the retiring French ambassador.

"Then I added some conservatories, not such as at my beloved Deepdeen, but a wonder for London.

"In the dining-room (an enormous room for a town house) I have had the walls completely covered with tapestries, the Flemish—Heaven protect us from the latter-day revelations in that art!—which, with the oak furniture I have had brought over from Bruges, makes the room remind me of the library in your dear Virginia home.

"Sir William's business here, as well as his family connections, have brought us directly to the acquaintance of many distinguished people. The old duke visited us almost immediately. He was most complimentary to your daughter, and it was through him I made sure we had the

invitations to the ball at Carleton House, where we met not only the prince, but many of the prince's special friends, including Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Lawrence, and an exuberant little Irishman named Moore, who writes love songs.

"I wore a magnificent dress, 'an I say it who shouldn't,' for I was anxious that Sir William and you, mother mine, should feel proud of your daughter. It was of white satin, embroidered in silver, with an enormous court train lined with green, and I wore my emeralds and diamonds.

"The old duke came for us, and inspected me through his eyeglass before we started. He is very tall, very thin; his face is scant, and he hops like a snow-bird when he walks; but if he were to go down the Strand with his person costumed in a flag, one could never forget he is a gentleman.

"The duke presented us to the prince

as his American kinsfolk, and it pleased his Royal Highness to be more than gracious to us. As the future King of England, he interests one, of course, but personally *he bored me to death.*

"While other monarchs are fighting for their thrones in these tremendous times, he stays at home and gives balls, forsooth! He is tall and handsome, but I felt that a good, honest emotion would remove the top of his head; and I can not imagine how any woman could ever have loved him or allowed him to deceive her.

"There is something about a Great, Honest Passion, even if unlawful, that one forgives, but these everlasting Light Loves of our future sovereign seem to me little short of bestial.

" Perhaps the men whom I have known so well have spoiled me. There is no finer gentleman anywhere than my own dear husband and Robin Killduff—and here,

Madame Mother, I rise to make complaint against your favourite.

"Do you know that our gentleman Robin is very well born, and that his whole name is Robin Killduff MacLaren, and that he comes of a noble Scottish family, but, his father being a younger son and very poor, he made shift to mend his fortunes in the way we know. And to this deception Sir William has been privy; but the second complaint of him is worse, for my baby, my manling, loves this Robin better than anything on earth, I think. He toddles after him, shrieking with delight if he can get near him; he hoards up impossible presents to bestow on him, and tears—huge tears—stream over his face when he is finally pried away from the society of Mr. MacLaren.

"About the Little One—he is so beautiful, such a magnificent thing, that passers-by stop to stare after him, and

withal the very most lovable child in the world.

"But the oddest part of him is that the infant has conceived his Royal Highness, the prince, to be the drollest thing in existence. While we were in the gardens the other day, when the prince did us the honour to stop and talk, my degenerate son watched him for a while, and then I saw his little eyebrows begin to quiver, and that droll look to come into his eyes, and frankly regarding his future king as if he were a marionette, he began to chuckle aloud. The prince was so much attracted by my boy that he invited, pleaded with him almost, to come and walk, but the baby refused any further intimacy than this highly cynical contemplation, each new movement of his Royal Highness being greeted with shrieks of mirth.

"Sir William is going to write you, and your deceptive friend, Robin Killduff

MacLaren; so, with much love to you from me and the real King of the Whole World, George, I am

"Your affectionate daughter,

"ELINOR."

Lady Elinor did but gloss over the attention she received at the ball at Carleton House; the prince, I was told, singling her out in a way that set the whole company a-talking, ending the evening by walking through a minuet with her, during which performance Sir William said she bore herself as a gentlewoman who was conferring an honour rather than receiving one.

During all the time of our settlement in London there had been no mention of Lord Bedford in the talk, nor had he visited us. It came later to my knowledge that he was then in Scotland, coming back the very day of the festivity—having, as

yet, no sure knowledge of Lady Elinor's presence in England. The manner of their meeting came to me through Sir William, Lord Harry having told him of it later.

He had been standing with Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Brummell, when that well-bred dandy said to him :

"Gad, Harry, have you seen the new beauty ? There's been nothing like her—in your time." Whereupon he conducted my Lord Bedford to the dancing-room, which he himself had just quitted, so that Lord Bedford's first sight of Lady Elinor was when she was dancing with his Royal Highness ; and, although I saw it not, I can well imagine the haughtiness and grace with which she bore herself, men's admiration coming to her so easily that she ever thought but lightly of it.

At the breaking up of the ball, there was naught would do Sir William but that Henry Bedford should come home with

them. "I am going to stop at Dysart's a while about the embassy affair; but go you home with Lady Elinor, and make our house as your own while you are up in town."

Thus forced to it, the two rode home together, she talking gaily and in high spirits to Lord Harry, who sat quiet and listened, with eyes warm with happiness. The house was darkened when they entered, and as they were left in the shaded drawing-room, Henry Bedford came over toward her and took her in his arms.

"I want you," he said—"I want you."

"Come with me," she answered, and taking his hand, she led him up the stairs. Following, but not knowing her intention, he went with her, and together they entered the nursery. Master George had uncovered himself so that his little arms were bare.

"Look at him," she said proudly; "was there ever such a baby—such a man-child?

For his sake I must be as good a woman as I can. Tell me that you see; that you understand."

"*I want my wife*," he answered.

There was no time for response before Sir William's voice was heard below. "Where are you?" he called gaily, and, as he entered the nursery, he gazed in a great tenderness at Lady Elinor, saying: "I knew you were here, little mother. You would stop armies to show them your baby. Was there ever such a woman before since the world began?" and going to her, he put his arm around her, Lord Bedford looking on.

CHAPTER IX

After the gaiety, which was my lady's formal introduction into the great world, our house became one of the centres of fashionable life, and rest there was none. The prince himself would come in frequently of an evening, wearing a long military cloak through the streets, so that none might know him, to have my lady sing for him and tell him American stories, which he always thought expressly entertaining.

I could see that this made Sir William both anxious and fretful, and after one such time he said, in my hearing: "Dear, the prince admires you so much that you must be careful. The gossips must never

think they have cause to wag their tongues."

My lady looked at Sir William for a moment; in her eyes was that same look of drollery I have often seen in Master George's face, and she laughed before saying, with a touch of melodrama and as a joke: "My lord and sovereign! When your wife's reason is tottering on its throne she may be moved by the admiration of a tailor's model, but, being still able to judge between a man and a bundle of clothes, she begs leave to change the subject."

It was one afternoon of the time when these visits were still a matter of some concern to us, my lady was walking in the gardens with Sir Thomas Lawrence (he was painting the picture, of which I have before spoken, at the time), when an old crone dropped a courtesy in front of Master George, who was with them, exclaiming, "It is he sure, who is the living moral of

the prince as a baby," and she looked with suspicion and a kind of cringing at Lady Elinor. "One could never have told them apart," she went on. "Do you want your fortune told, pretty lady?"

Lady Elinor refused with some haughtiness, and, as we made to pass her by, the gipsy said, "Royal blood—the blood of kings!"

It was but a guess, the eldritch old hag having naught of the supernatural about her, save the amount of impudence she possessed; but as they went their way, Sir Thomas said to my lady, "It is curious that it should be so, but many people have spoken to me of this resemblance." I know, from my lady's journal, that it was about this time that she began to have her final suspicions of the truth.

There was another who made bold to talk to my lady about the prince, and this was Lord Bedford, of whom I would now

be writing. He had reached, by this time, his thirty-second year, the time in life when men like to see their wives at the heads of their tables and their bairns growing up about them. He was still very handsome and attractive to all, especially to women, retaining to the full that charm of manner which, as I have said before, I can recall in none other.

In the visits which he made to America it was difficult to come at truth regarding him, seeing him, as I always did, broke from his own natural setting and in disjointed surroundings. Here, however, he showed different, as a man of great importance, and many were the loud complaints that he did not choose to marry and give Brentworth House and Broadstairs a mistress, and himself an heir.

There was another thing I noted which my lady, too, saw with much concern and self-reproach, and this was the man's con-

stant loneliness and lack of home ties, which threw him continually in the way of temptation. His companions were generally roistering blades who, like himself, had no wives to weep over them if they reeled home in the dawn of the morning, far gone in their cups; or if he lost a thousand guineas at play, there was none to speak of the son and heir from whose baby fingers the money was being stolen. So it was that, not only by my own observation, but by hearsay, I became aware that at times my lord drank and played deeper than was wise, if there be any depth in either which can be considered wisdom.

It was the old duke, Sir William's kinsman, who told me that Henry Bedford had come to the title by a lucky chance for him, which had removed by small-pox three direct claimants, and that, until he was come of age, he had been in the army, poor and disregarded.

"'Tis a pity," the old man continued, "that he does not marry. Harry is a good fellow, who, I fear, is going to the devil for lack of something to care for."

I know from my lady's book that all this comment was not unknown to her, and that she broke out in fierce self-reproaches at times, as being the cause of his wild ways. There was another thing, too, that weighed on her mind, and this was his frequent outbursts of jealousy, in which he would all but insult her about the admiration she received from other men, and then fall on his knees and beg her pardon, saying that she was indeed an angel, and he a brute fallen too low for her to notice. Still, although it angered him, I could not but think he was proud of the notice she attracted wherever she went, but it ever wrought in his mind that none knew she loved him, and that he could not wear this jewel before the world as his own.

There was yet another thing that crossed between them—whether by hints or not I have let it out I can not tell—but my lady was all for the books, and had so fine a drift toward being a scholar that, had she been well grounded in the classics, there is little she could not have done. This deficiency, however, made her slight Homer, Plato, and Æschylus as belated and unimmediate, and place heavier stress on Shakespeare and the man named Goethe, whom to the end, I think, she always overrated. This natural bent, and the great desire to educate Master George herself, gave to my lady an impetus toward real mind work which wrought a change in her very nature, and in some of her talks with Henry Bedford (who knew a book contained reading matter, and that only by hearsay, but who never opened one, unless it were his betting-book) I have seen her turn away dispassionately and in a superior

manner as a mother does from a fractious child.

These matters all conspired to fret Lord Bedford, though till the end there was naught in my lady's conduct toward him to bespeak that she loved him the less; she had given her heart to him as a girl; she loved him as a woman, and she died with his name on her lips.

There was one incident, which I gathered from the journal, that has remained ever in my mind. Lord Bedford's jealousy had broken out anew, by reason of my lady's portrait being copied for the Prince of Wales, and he had so upbraided and fumed that my lady was all but outdone with him.

"You say you love me!" he broke forth. "It is ever the saying and never the doing! How can I tell? What proof have I of this old love?"

Whereupon my lady arose with state-

liness and, ringing the bell, said to Gregory, "Tell Fraulein Rosa to bring Master George to Lord Bedford—he requires to see him," and, turning to leave the room, she continued, with great gentleness, "I think there is some proof here, my lord."

There was another phase of his life which fretted me not a little as well as the ones already mentioned, and this was his relations with women, which were discussed openly at the clubs. There was one in particular of which I heard frequent comment concerning an actor woman named Fontleroy, who was, I believe, the merriest and most unmoral baggage that ever came out of Killarney, and the tide of town gossip overflowed with tales of her sauciness and little mutinies. Rumour had it that the name she was born to was O'Flaherty, and that the father of her was "a-going-about-body in a cart," the truth of which I can neither affirm nor

deny; but to see her in the park with her frills and furbelows in the fine equipage for which, by report, she was indebted to Lord Bedford, was one of the sights of the town. She was a brown beauty, with a glowing, flower-like face, full-breasted, with slender waist and great length of limb, and the audacity of the devil himself.

It was reported that she had been drawn to the attention of Lord Bedford by a story repeated to him at one of the clubs of her treatment of the Prince of Wales, who had thrown the royal handkerchief in her direction and been flouted in public for his pains.

"The Prince of Wales!" she had laughed. "What sort of a conquest is he for a woman of my spirit? 'Tis any pretty woman may have him for the asking! If it had been my Lord Bedford, now"—and she laughed again—"if it had been my Lord Bedford, who shall say?"

He had never noted her before the hearing of this story; but soon after, his vanity no doubt being touched, he went to view her as Lady Teazle, a part which I can testify she played with great jauntiness and fire. At the close of this performance he was presented to her, and afterward, with nothing much worse than a drifting on his part, but with great intention on hers, the intimacy between them began, which extended over many years. Even at this time, and despite the stories of the great sums of money he had, by reason of his infatuation, lavished upon her, I think my judgment of the affair was a just one to him. I believe he never loved the woman, but had for her one of those passions which I have known men, who love their wives dearly, to contract for another woman. It is not to my way of thinking, though, ever the fine part to play; for there is this about promiscuous love-

making: it forever creates situations which are wrong either to break or to continue, so that a man must needs be constantly going from one side of the road to the other; nor is the sincerity of conduct, which is the part of a gentleman, ever possible to him.

The effect of this woman's influence upon Lord Bedford fell beneath my very eyes, and I could mark with great distinctness the downward going of him in these first years of it.

It was a curious piece of human doings altogether; for here, by reason of great beauty, great charm, and celebrity, were Lady Elinor and Mistress Fontleroy set side by side in the town talk. The gentlemen who gathered with their ladies at our house in Portman Square gathered without their ladies at hers, the house in Bedford Place, so that talk was carried back and forth, no doubt, as the play ran high and the drinking deep.

CHAPTER X

THE events which fell on the evening of the tenth of May I remember with a distinctness which I have not for the happenings of a few days ago. In the first place, it was my birthday, and I gave myself an outing in the evening, dining at the Strollers Club, intending to go on later to see the play. The eating-room was crowded when I entered, and as I stood looking around for a table, I was greeted by a Colonel O'Farrel, whom I knew for a red-headed Irishman, well along in the forties, a gay wit, of unquestioned bravery and a conceit of himself which was very high. He had been Senior Wrangler in his time at my own college, and though he

was a boaster of his parts, he seemed able to make his boasting good, and was altogether a good fellow, given a bit to gaming, and, like so many of the Irish, one who would never spoil a story by hampering himself by the facts.

It was during the course of our dinner that in some way the prince's name was brought to the fore, and the sudden burst of anger into which he flew startled me not a little.

"The prince!" he cried; "it's little I care for the prince—a damned cowardly stealer of other folks' goods. He took from me a friend I am wanting every day. When I think of Jack Dulany, I could see the prince hanged and stand by with a smile on my face. Do you want a tale," he went on, "a tale of the long ago?"

The colonel lighted his cigar, and, blowing out a cloud of smoke, set about his story with a darkened brow.

"Once upon a time, a quarter of a century ago, in the north of Ireland, at Dundalk, near the Irish Sea, there lived a poor gentleman with one daughter, the fame of whose beauty had gone forth even to foreign lands.

"How is that for a beginning?" he interrupted himself, laughingly.

"It reads like a book," I answered.

"Her name was Betty Mahony, and many were the rich gentlemen, and even noblemen, who would have forgiven her want of dowry for the sake of her beautiful eyes. Well, when Jack Dulany was but a subaltern I had command in the same regiment, the two of us being stationed near Dundalk, close to the tumble-down mansion of Mistress Betty Mahony, with whom Master Jack did fall so much in love that he was the laughing-stock of the whole mess for his foolish behaviour. Man, it was piteous! Before this he had been a

wild fellow of fine metal, true to his friends, fighting his enemies, of a strong stomach for his drink and his victuals, and with a laugh for the whole world. You should have seen the change which came over him. First his appetite went from him, he lost or won at cards indifferently, and once Tremaine, of the Twelfth, almost gave him the lie direct, and Jack never put hand to his sword. It seemed as though he were clean gone from his wits. I don't know how you feel about it, Mr. Killduff, but I am feared for my life with women. The end of his affairs with Mistress Mahony was what no one expected, for the two of them went off one fine day and were married, and for about a year all went well.

"The beauty of her soon became the talk of the army. Men who had never even seen her toasted her beauty, and the tales of her loveliness came to the ears of his precious Royal Highness. It so hap-

pened that one day, being in England with her husband's regiment, she came to a review, and directly under the eyes of the prince, who, after, did little but talk of her beauty. He was about twenty at the time, Mistress Dulany being a year or two older. Several of Dulany's friends (myself among the number) advised him to send his wife away quietly; but he was as proud of her beauty as she was herself, which is putting it strongly, I think; and so, at an officers' ball, Mistress Dulany was presented to the prince, who danced with her, and showed such infatuation that at last Dulany became alarmed, and sent his wife away—somewhere in Surrey, to an old aunt of his. Within two days of her arrival, two gentlemen unknown to the country, officers in the Guards, appeared at the neighbouring inn, and, for the next three months or so, would come and go, apparently with no special business, but just as it listed them.

"There was a fine large forest near the place, and afterward it was known that Mistress Dulany had been seen walking there several times with one of these gentlemen, whose manner toward her was such as to lead the villagers who saw them together to believe him to be her husband.

"Dulany was ordered to the north, and it was a long time before he was able to see his wife again. When he returned he took her to France, he being under orders for the far south; she to remain in Paris with some friends until his return.

"It was there a child was born to her. I heard the news before Dulany, who laughed at it as a good joke, saying that surely he should be the one to know such a thing first, but he asked for leave, which he obtained, to go to his wife. He left the regiment on the 23d of September, and I never saw him again. He went to France, had an interview with his wife,

whom he found living in great splendour near Neuilly, and shot himself the next morning in his dressing-room. The tale was hushed up, and I never knew what became of the woman and the child. There has been some rumour that she is in one of the Americas, but of that I really know nothing.

"And now," he concluded, "you will be after knowing why I hate the prince, which leads me to inquire what are your plans for the rest of the night?"

It was now long past the time for the play, and I told him my evening was disengaged.

"Then come with me," he cried enthusiastically; "there's a friend of mine I should like you to meet. Tom Moore is his name, and he writes as pretty a song—and sings it, too—as any man from the Green Isle ever did. He is to be at the house of another friend of mine (sure

we're all Irish together), who will make you fine and welcome."

About ten, therefore, the two of us set forth, walking, as the night was fine and starry, the whole way from the club to the house where the festivity was to be.

Near Russell Square we turned into a side street, in the middle of which was a fine old mansion brilliantly lighted, the doors standing open, and the sound of stringed music floating out of the windows. Like so many of the English town houses of the time, there were but two or three steps to ascend to the lower floor, where we were met by a flunkey of approved obsequiousness, who waited upon us.

The dining-room on the right was lit up, and standing by the sideboard, as we looked in, was a little old lady in wondrous gay costume, who greeted us in a high key, professing herself charmed at the meeting. She had a small face, with the parenthesis-

shaped marks around the mouth, like so many of her countrywomen, a scant nose, uptilted and red, little dancing gray eyes, and a terrible stream of steady conversation.

"Sit ye down here," she said, and the brogue of her was strongly marked. "Sit ye down here while I finish makin' the punch. Sure it's a fine hand I am at the punch brewin'!"

"There'll be none who'll contradict ye at that," said the colonel, "only, to be telling the whole truth, I'm the finer."

"Ye were ever a consayted man, Michael O'Farrel," she answered, "and ye're father before ye."

"Faith, I make my word good," answered the colonel; "bring me a bowl, and we'll leave the company above to decide the question."

A bowl and some ingredients being brought, the two of them fell to work, I

being called to the colonel's aid to help with the lemons, the two of them meanwhile exchanging conversation, or rather insults, in high good humour.

"It's not the brewin' of the punch that I'm questionin', it's the taste of you, Colonel O'Farrel; you should leave others to name your virtues. You've no sense of conduct and niver had."

"Bein' raised with you, Mistress Rafferty, there should be some excusing of me."

"Michael," the little woman said, turning down her skirts, which, for their greater protection, had been pinned up around her waist, "ye're red-headed as was Judas, and ye and the truth have never had even a bowin' acquaintance, and the sound of your own voice is honey to your ears, but you're unsafe for a woman of virtue to have dealin's with, an' I must think of my reputation, so good-even' to

ye," and, raising her punch-bowl, and the colonel taking his, the two of them, with me in the wake, ascended the stairs.

As I followed them I noted anew the elegance of the appointments, noted as well a certain carelessness, as though the affairs of the house were not well looked after. On a satin couch in the upper hall were two or three punch-glasses, some of the liquid which they had contained having been spilled on the covering. The rugs were awry, and there was a general impression produced on me in many ways that the little niceties of life were here much overlooked. From a small room on the left I heard laughter, with women's voices mixed through it, and the sound of money and the dice-throwing; but it was only on my entering the drawing-room that I knew for a surety where I stood. By some throw of Fate it was the house kept by Henry Bedford, and the party

given there was by its present mistress. The woman herself was standing near the centre of the room, talking to two or three men. She wore a wonderful gown of yellow of the kind the French Josephine so much affected. Her arms and much of her breast were bare, and there was an allurement about her which was surely not all good. As I was brought forward to be presented, I saw for the first time that Lord Bedford was lounging in a window, smoking and staring forth into the night.

If it were bitter for him to have me there, it was a bitterness fair matched by that in my own heart. There is no place in London I would have more steadfastly avoided, if left to my own guidance, and I could have embraced Colonel O'Farrel for his presentation of me.

"'Twas kidnapping I did for your party, Kathleen," he said to Mistress Fontleroy—"clean kidnapping, for Mr. Killduff

had as little idea of the place he was being brought as you that he was coming. Is Tom Moore here? I have promised Mr. Killduff that he shall hear him sing."

"Yes," she answered, and the voice of her was deep and of a singing quality, "he is here; and as for hearing him sing, Mr. Killduff, it's like you'll get too much of it, for he is equally difficult to start and to stop."

Lord Bedford's conduct toward me was of a piece with the rest of him. He gave me a nod between his puffs of smoke which was little more than a dropping of the eyelids, and took no more notice of me, for that time at least.

It was plain to me from the first that our hostess was in no extraordinary good-humour, and from some of the glances I saw her throw from time to time in Lord Bedford's direction, I could have sworn he was the offender. She did not really listen

to the singing of Anacreon Moore, though some of the verses were in her own praise, but rather appeared to endure it to go on; and I think more than myself were of the opinion that there was a bad time ahead for my Lord Bedford.

It was a merry place, however, and many a gay gentleman I found stopped in on his way home late at night to sing a song, toss off a jest, or win or lose a guinea at the play. There was little matter made here of a bit of misconduct, and if one so forgot himself as to take too much liquor, he was but carried to some other apartment and left to recover his wits at his leisure, while the company toasted him for a good fellow, and sang a little louder to drown his noise.

In this place the admiration which the prince gave my lady had not passed unnoticed, and the worst construction possible put upon it, you may be sure. I

found later the gossip concerning Master George's resemblance to his Royal Highness was rife about the town. O'Farrel, Mr. Mohun, and one whose name I can not set down now, had but seated ourselves for a game of *écarté* when who should burst into the room, a little the worse already for his drinks, but Mr. Hugh St. John, and a man with fewer gentlemanly instincts I have yet to see. He was fresh from the theatre, and after holding forth at length on the beauty of Miss O'Neil, which I could see was a far from pleasing subject to Mistress Fontleroy, he said :

"Ah ! but 'tis Lady Elinor Grafton you should have seen. The play almost stopped when she came to her box, and immediately after the prince followed her, and 'twas plain to be seen she does with him as she will."

"Did they"—said Mistress Rafferty—"did they have the baby with them ?

'Twould have been quite a family gathering then."

I glanced upward from the cards for a minute at Lord Bedford. He stirred in the window-seat, and, although his eye did not meet mine, he knew I was looking at him.

"Ah! well, and what if 'tis all true?" the Mistress Fontleroy asked; "'tis sure no one's business but their own. As I have said, we women—we all have our price. Mine, you see, was"—and she cast a glance of passion, and there was something of sadness in it, too—"was my Lord Bedford——"

"And my Lady Grafton's is the Prince of Wales," the cur St. John interrupted with a laugh.

I put my cards on the table and turned to Lord Bedford and waited. It was sure his cue, his privilege, to speak first. I looked full in his eyes, and saw what I felt

he would rather have died than I should see—that his position in this house and with this woman made it almost impossible that he should be the one to resent an insult to the love of his life. The morsel was sweet eating to me, and I felt that without any speech my eyes showed the scorn I had of him.

Rising from the table, I turned to Mr. St. John, who faced me as I turned.

"If Lady Grafton's name could be blackened, 'twould be by you taking it on your infamous tongue. I am not needing speech to clear her honour, but only to tell you, Mr. St. John, that you are a liar in your throat!" and I struck him full in the mouth with the back of my hand. He was for swords at the moment, but Colonel O'Farrel, and some other gentlemen, spoke for some decency of behaviour in the matter, and a meeting was arranged for the following night at Hyde Park, Colonel O'Far-

rel, I think, more than a little pleased at the turn of the evening's affairs. Before I left, a thing happened so curious that I set it down as a bit of oddity. St. John had taken himself off after the affair, and I was for withdrawing also, when Mistress Fontleroy came down the stairs, at the bottom of which I stood.

"You're a *man*, Mr. Killduff," she said, "and I am grateful to have seen this evening's work. Ah! but you were fine as you struck him in the mouth. 'I need no speech for her honour, but only to tell you that you are a liar in your throat,'" and she said my words over with a dramatic move. "The heart of me moves toward you for it all," and then, holding her scarlet lips toward mine, "Kiss me!" she said.

"I am no stealer of another man's rights," I answered her, laughing, though her impassionedness over what she considered a brave act was a fine thing to see.

"It is the hand of you, Mistress Fontleroy, that I will be kissing with a fair conscience and the knowledge, I hope, that you will pardon the scene I was forced to make in your very presence."

"I would not have missed it for all there is of me," she answered me, "and I hope that to-morrow night you're as well as now," and she held my hand in both of hers for a minute ere we parted.

She was a fine spirit, this girl, whatever her bad faults may have been, and, much as I had hated Lord Bedford, I thought, with a sour humour on my way home, that there must be something in us much alike, the kind of woman we each admired most being similar in the extreme.

Colonel O'Farrel accompanied me when I left the house, and was full of excitement over the affair.

"Ye're Scotch," he says, "and it's sure I am that you boggle with the sword.

Just come to my rooms and have a try with me till I see."

"Indeed," I protested, "I do not boggle either with the long or the short sword. I am unafraid."

"Which may be an ignorant surety," he answered.

"My father was the finest sword at Oxford in his time, and later in all Scotland," I said proudly. Here was a subject about which I ever felt a little vainglorious. "Do you think he would bring his son up in ignorance?"

It was with much difficulty that I was able to withstand his invitation, but upon this point I was firm, and he walked with me to the steps of our house in Portman Square, giving me a hearty "Good-night," and the promise of an early visit on the morrow.

It was very late as I entered, and, with the hope of not disturbing the household, I

crept softly up to the first landing. There was a brilliant light burning in the smaller reception-room, and standing with a bright spot of colour in either cheek, and a look of timidity I had never seen before, was Lady Elinor. Beside her was the Prince of Wales, and even as I looked he leaned forward and kissed her on the brow, and, as he passed me, thinking no doubt that I was one of the servants, there were tears in his eyes, and, I can swear on my honour, knowing all, that that inadequate performer of a king's part had, in his wrecked life, one emotion of which he need not be ashamed.

I kept myself well in the shadow as he passed, and turned to my room by the smaller stairs, for I knew, as by a woman's instinct, what had happened; that my lady and I had had, in different ways, the same story told to us both upon the same night.

I do not wish to be making this affair with Mr. St. John of much moment, for the fight was in itself of but little consequence. We met—he with his friend, Mr. Endicott, as his second, I with Colonel O'Farrel as mine—at the turn in the park where the old fountain used to stand. It was not a match from the very start, for the man had no feel for his sword. Every one who loves the weapon for itself will know what I mean by that, and, to use my friend O'Farrel's speech, he boggled with it. A man who has any passion for his blade knows it as a part of himself, can feel with its point as he could with his bare finger tip; and to see the light trickling down its side warms the cockles of his heart. But this man's head and hand were heavy, by reason of the drink, and it would have been little short of murder for me to have done with him what I could. I but bided my time, until he made one mortal loose thrust,

and, striking hard with the upward stroke, I sent his sword spinning into the grass.

The whole affair was for him pitiable in the extreme, and he apologized, in the end, in a way that must forever have made even the memory of me unendurable to him. This trouble I set down because of the increase in the hate I felt for Henry Bedford, for from that night till the close of our intercourse I never knew his eye voluntarily to meet mine.

CHAPTER XI

DURING all our life in London there was surely no social attention or honour which Lady Elinor did not receive—her doings being chronicled at length in the fashion pamphlets of the day, her house the rendezvous of the most famous men of the period. So the time passed until eighteen hundred and eight, in September of the year, my lady having but newly returned from Bath, when we made our visit to Erfurt, which brought into her life a vivid and widening influence that helped her till its close.

The Emperor Napoleon had arranged his famous meeting with the Czar Alexander at this place, to determine the disposi-

tion to be made of Moldavia and Wallachia, and hither, in the character of visiting Americans, Lady Elinor and Sir William repaired. We were to stay, while in this quaint town, at the house of the Countess of Stümberg, one of Sir William's German connections.

I knew at some later time, though not then, that this errand was one for the Government; but the feeling toward England being but lukewarm in Germany, Sir William essayed the character of an American planter, to be the better received.

The countess, a red-cheeked, black-eyed, little body of about sixty, with a small, round head set on a small, round body, like an apple on a cheese, spoke the vilest English I have ever heard with the greatest complacency, but her house was a delightful place, and she was well received wherever she went. Into this society Lady Elinor entered with an enthusiasm such

as she had never shown in London. Indeed, there was more cause for enthusiasm, for all the great people of Europe seemed to be gathered in this narrow-streeted German village. The emperor, with that theatrical instinct which so much belittled his genius, to my way of thinking, had brought from Paris the greatest actors of the day. Mlles. Mars and Talma, in the very height of their genius, gave every evening one of the fine French dramas, no expense being spared in the matter of their production.

It was at a ball, given after one of these performances, that my lady made the rejoinder to his Majesty the emperor which has since been so oft repeated of her. She had shone with much splendour through the evening, and toward its close the emperor's eye alighted on her, and he asked to have her presented. Upon being told that she was an American, he exclaimed in his brusque way: "They tell me, Ma-

dame, that you are an American, but I make sure an older civilization claims you. You might be a daughter of sovereigns."

To which my lady replied, "Sire, in my country the people are sovereign, and I am a daughter of the people."

The emperor looked at her from under his heavy brows for a minute, as though lost in thought, and then he smiled. It was fortunate for this great but underbred man that he forbore to show Lady Elinor those marks of distinction, which he bestowed upon most women, for had he pulled her hair or tweaked her nose, as I have heard tell was sometimes his way, I believe her capable of boxing his ears before half the royalty of Europe. This, of course, is but a mere conjecture, and, as my lady's ideal of behaviour grew ever the higher as the years went by, it may do her an injustice, but she was never one to brook famil-

iarities, and I make sure could never have supported them from any man.

It was this same evening that standing in the group around the emperor was a man by whom the veriest oaf would have been impressed—the most magnificent presence, the most potent personality, I have ever met. There was a consciousness of greatness came from him such as one might expect from a dweller on the planet Mars. This man was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and his attitude of love and admiration to Elinor Grafton continued from that night until his death.

During the whole time of her stay at Erfurt he would ever single her out for his attentions, coming early in the afternoons to the Stümbergs, and sitting for tea in the little high-walled garden, among the flowers, till the sun went down. He was at work on his famous Elective Affinities at this time, and perhaps his discourse was

the more pleasing to her from the present bent of his great mind, for she would sit and brood on his words after he had gone, for hours at a time. I knew that the circumstances of her life had been revealed to him, whether by his own inferences or from her confession, I was then unaware.

I mention this to show the way the acquaintance began which so much changed Lady Elinor. It was from Goethe she learned that in this world women need expect to suffer from broken law more than men do, and some of the reasons for it. I make sure his Margaret was even then coming to her sad life, and it was of her he thought as he talked.

In Lady Elinor's journal from this time forth there is ever the talk of letting the individual wither, and becoming more and more one with the World Spirit, which seemed to me but another form of selfless-

ness, which she could just as well have found in the Bible ; but whether she got her Christianity by way of the Holy Scriptures or out of the Wilhelm Meister it makes little differ, for God uses one means for one, and another for another, but all things are His instruments in the end.

On our return to America there was scarce a mail for years after but carried some word for, or brought some message from, the great German, whose birthdays my lady always most reverently kept, and whom she mourned at death as for a father. She ever cherished the last words he said to her: "You must prepare yourself for change. Your only help lies within yourself. You must learn to find in loss a gain to match, and then the high gods smite in vain."

I am setting down all this talk of our life abroad as an excusing for Lady Elinor, for the great, nay, the greatest, of the earth

bowed before her loveliness and charm ; but were all as nothing beside the man her heart had acknowledged as its master.

It was immediately after our return from the Continent that the business of the company was brought about which so engrossed me for several years that intercourse with the family for any length of time was almost impossible. The fishing and fur interests had so multiplied that Sir William decided to place these affairs in the hands of a company of which I was made manager.

It was but a roving life I lived for several years after this, being back and forth between Newfoundland, Virginia, and England several times each year ; and though, in the second year of my new work, the Grafton family returned from London to Deepdeen, my knowledge of their affairs was but scattering.

Of Henry Bedford I knew more, and

what information I received from the clubs was but little to his credit. The Fontleroy had been supplanted by a successor, and the stories of the man's dissipation were common scandal.

In the few times which I met with him in London during this period it was easy for me to note the rapid down-going of him. There was a recklessness in his speech, which soon follows the deep drinking, as though the bonds of moral obligation were loosened in him, and his better self was slipping out of his reach entire. He tried ever to conceal these things from Lady Elinor. The happenings of his life he could, the effects of them he could not, but there was never in all her life one word of blame for him for aught he did, and, when you know the end, you will wonder at this with me.

It was, I believe, as nearly as my memory will serve me, four years after the fam-

ily's return to Virginia that I took up my permanent abode with them again. Lady Elinor had grown from a girl to a woman, and Master George from a toddling child into a fine youth of ten or eleven. The affection between these two was something beautiful to see; the lad, who was both handsome and affectionate, loving and admiring his mother beyond everything else on earth, and she being to him as an elder comrade or confidante, but always with something of the teacher in her talk. It seems as if the great mental letting in of light, which she had experienced in Germany, was all to be used for Master George, and it was of him and his education she would ever be thinking. I make sure that, as the years went by, she feared more and more the influence of his heredity, and her every effort was bent toward making the boy's nature finely self-controlled. That she was fearful of the lawlessness, which

she felt might be his curse, one was made conscious in every serious conversation she had over the child. It was of his great jealousy that she had the most fear, for that which is but usual in a child toward a parent became in Master George a kind of ecstasy, his nature running so wild that at times he would dash at Sir William, when he had showed some tenderness toward her, and kick at him or try to bite his hand.

There was, too, by reason of his circumstances, the greatest trouble to carry any sort of self-restraint forward with anything like success. He lived in a boy's paradise. He had his own beagles and hawks, and his horses and negroes, among whom he lorded it and commanded and punished as he thought best. "He rode like a young monkey, and often would go miles to see a rough-and-tumble fight, where the contestants would bite each other's ears off, remove each other's eyes, or some such bru-

tality." * 'Twas the way of old Virginia at the time, and Master George, at the age of twelve, drank his glass of beer, rode after the hounds in his little pink coat, and backed his favourite bird to a good stiff sum at the cocking main.

Then there was the matter of Fairfax House, which was virtually his to command, Lord Harry ever urging the use of the house upon him as though it were already his own ; and so it fell that my lady, strive as she would, could not but see her efforts thrown back upon herself, and the boy little bettered by them all, and this largely because of the very circumstances by which she had surrounded him.

During the period of which I now write, Lord Harry's visits became less frequent, and when he did come among us the loose living and unconnectedness of his life were ever the more apparent. There

* From the Life of John Randolph—Adams.

were lines of dissipation on his handsome brown face, and rumour was rife in London of another actor woman there, to whom my Lord Bedford had been more than kind. Nor was she the only one with whom his name was connected. To the close, however, I believe my lady remained unaware of all this, but it a bit the more prepared me for the end.

CHAPTER XII

It was at the end of his thirteenth or the beginning of his fourteenth year that the matter of the education of Master George was handed over to me. Tutor after tutor had been routed by him in one way or another, and, as a finality, he decided for himself that he would have me or none to teach him. This decision my lady made known to me in the following manner—we were lingering over the breakfast one morning when she spoke, with the little holding together of the eyebrows which ever showed she was in a merry mood :

"You have very little really to occupy your time, you know, Mr. Killduff."

I looked at her and pulled down the corners of my mouth a trifle, for my days had been so overcrowded with business of late that I felt I would soon have to be sitting up nights to get through that which was heaped upon me.

"There are some few things about Deepdeen of which you do not have the worry as yet. I still order my own gowns, and George buys his dogs for himself."

We both broke into a laugh over this, for Sir William's health had been failing rapidly of late, and I had been given all the business affairs in the North to attend to, as well as Madame Dulany's fortune to manage. It seemed as if the entire responsibility of the two households were put upon me as well, and this was no light burden, for not one of them, with the exception of Sir William, knew or cared aught of the value of money. It was always "Go to Robin," "Ask Mr. Killduff," "Robin

will know about it," and such like; and Master George, as he grew older, would throw money, as the Persians say, after the birds. There seemed no way to stop him either; if Sir William and his mother refused him, there was a doting grandmother across the hill, or a rich gentleman, by name Bedford, up at Fairfax House, who would grant any request, reasonable or otherwise. I said no word, however, but waited for my lady to explain.

"We were thinking," she continued, "Sir William and I, that you might fill in your leisure time by teaching George."

"Take any shape but that," I laughed, "and my firm nerve will never tremble! Think of the poor men who have, with difficulty, escaped with their lives!"

"I doubt, if you refuse, that he will but grow up in ignorance. Please try, Robin, won't you? You can get a clerk or some one to help in the other business, perhaps

two." She would just as readily have suggested six.

It so fell that Master George's education came into my hands, and within the first few days the boy amazed me with his capacities, and I bethought me of the old wives' stories—that children of such begetting as his were ever the brightest. I have seen him fling himself into a chair with a lesson, and, before he would get well settled, hand it over to me learned, and recite it with accuracy and nice adjustments. It appeared as though he knew some process to transfer the printed page to his brain; he told me once that in some of his finer moods he could read a page of Cæsar and, closing the book, recite the first word of every line on the page from the picture on his brain. It was not of his memory, however, but of his reason as well, that my greatest wonder in him lay, for it worked with a correctness of logic

and passionlessness that was inhuman in one sort; and he would state his observations of the problems of life in a cool and impartial way, caring little whether his views agreed with the laws of church or state. As he came into his manhood, which he did with less modesty and more carrying of things before him than any lad I ever knew, there broke loose in him another fault besides his jealousy of his mother, and this was his love of women. It was a thing surely to be expected, and by the time he was seventeen there was no girl, white or yellow or brown, who was safe from him. He had a trick of dragging me into these affairs, for, after he discovered my love for his mother, he knew his power over me and used it mercilessly. There was one day about this time that, the daily lessons being over, he was sitting in the open window smoking, when he turned abruptly and said:

"I think I'll go out and find something to make love to," and a little later I saw him mount his horse and ride off with a salute to his mother, a ringing laugh and a merry devil in his eye. I thought to myself, as I looked on, that in his person was the rod for my most dear lady's punishment.

In January of his eighteenth year I took him abroad on his travels, and a trip with the Jew who wanders would have been rest compared to it. We went first to London, where Master George made love to Lady Beatrice Deauceace, and was seen by her own brother kissing her in the garden. The affair came almost to swords before I was able to drag him away to Bath, where he had been but a fortnight present when he had the laundress's daughter in love with him to such a degree that she fell into an ailing, which her mother feared was like to prove mortal. From

this place we went to Paris, and here, I might say in a general way, he made love to everybody with great catholicity of taste and an entire disregard of any kind of consequences.

He had come in one afternoon and was lying on a divan in front of the fire, regarding me curiously as I sat reading.

"You don't approve of me, do you, Robin?" he broke forth presently.

"Who could?" I answered, looking at him and smiling, for there was much that was lovable about him, in spite of his vices, which had at least the merit of being even discouragingly frank and open.

"I do," he answered, and my heart thumped against the frame of my body, as I saw his eyebrows draw together in the manner of one who was very dear to me. "I do. You see I am forced to it, after a fashion, since no one else does. Perhaps, after all," he went on with the jesting

tone, "it is I who am right and you who are wrong. You may not be educated up to me, Robin Killduff."

His manner was so like his mother's, his Irish eyes with the lids held level over them, and the long black lashes were so like hers, that the pain of my life struck me hard, and I winced and set my teeth, but I made no answer. He did not notice my silence, being taken up entirely with his own affairs.

"I have been thinking myself over lately, dispassionately, and with as little prejudice as is possible under the circumstances," he went on, "and find that I am uncorroborated—I can find no other word for it—in my own family. You know there was never a better, a more beautiful, or, I believe, a more brilliant woman than my mother. I may not be an impartial judge, but I hold that opinion, as I think you do yourself, and yet, with that single excep-

tion, I find that I have little or no respect for any of the rest of the sex. I am told I should have respect for them. Why should I?"

"It is a thing," I answered, "which most gentlemen see without explanation."

"Intended to be cutting—and was," he answered meditatively, "but still not enlightening to the uninformed. Truly, Robin," he went on, sitting upright on the divan and blowing a cloud of smoke through his nose, "I believe so few things which most people believe, am so unimpressed by general opinion, that at moments I feel my earthly lonesomeness. This subject of women is one to which I have been giving considerable thought here lately." We both laughed at this. "I do not find in them the things which I have been taught, which you yourself have taught me, are the things I should respect. They

look at a man with beckoning in their eyes; they meet him more than half way; they find opportunities which he would never think of; and then, when he loses his head and does the thing he should not, but which, as I see it, he has more reasons for doing, being more strongly tempted from within, there is made some hue and cry about his lack of honour."

"If they are weaker, they are to be the more protected," I answered.

"It's the old argument, I find," he said; "but they enjoy being made love to just as much as a man enjoys making love to them. Not you—not men of your sort—for you don't care about that kind of thing. I do. It does not seem to me, however, that you should be praised any more than that I should be blamed. You don't praise a cow for not eating meat; it doesn't care for it."

"George, George," I cried, "for Heav-

en's sake stop jesting! This is not a subject that it is well for a man to make light upon."

"Is it not?" he continued. "Well, if it frets you, old man, I sha'n't. Let us speak of other things. I have been evolving a plan of late. 'Tis a good one, I think, and new. I am merely offering it as a suggestion, you will observe. Every man who is born has a fault which throws him, on an average, once a day, and he is forced to spend energy and vitality in the conquering of it. Now, why wouldn't it be a good plan for him to treat it thus: He will say to himself: I am a great liar. True, but in India lying is no vice; I will go to India. Or I am fond of drunkenness; in China it is recognised as a necessity; by some reversion of the race I am an Englishman, when I should have been a Chinese, so I will hie me back to Yellow Land, and save myself work and battle.

In my own case now"—and the young rake rose and put his thumbs in the armholes of his flowered waistcoat, and smiled at me whimsically—"Turkey is my home. I could there have a harem without having the finger of my Scotch friends pointed at me in scorn. You see morality is largely a question of latitude. Of course, you agree with me, Robin?"

"Of course I do nothing of the kind," I answered. "You are born an Anglo-Saxon. To the virtue standards of that race you are committed by birth——"

"Robin," he broke in, "I may be overstating it, but I believe," and he repeated this with a separation of the words as though in precise consideration, "I—may—be—overstating—it—but I believe you to be as incapable of a joke as the prophet Jeremiah."

There was something so serious in the whole talk, under the veneer of gaiety, that

I was prepared, after supper, for the sequel. He was dressing for some new piece of devilry with some men to whom Henry Bedford had given him letters, when he strayed over to my rooms, his brushes in his hand.

"When I said what I did about there being nothing in my family to corroborate me this afternoon, Robin, I was diverted from the tenure of my real thought to those few sentiments on morality which pleased you so. What I had intended saying was this: How did Sir William Grafton and my mother come to have a son like me? My mother—ah! she is an angel—and Sir William has been a model of all virtues since the age of swaddling-clothes. Now, if I had been Bedford's son, I might have comprehended it. I am more like him, which means I am less good than I should be. By the way, why have you never liked him, Robin?"

"There are many things about Lord Bedford which are very admirable," I answered.

"Why have you never liked him?" he repeated with intention.

"'Twas temperament," I answered; "and, too, he has never liked me."

"There is some deeper reason which I can not fathom," he responded, "which you will not tell, of course. They say the Morin woman is ruining him; that he squanders huge sums on her, and there has been talk of his marrying her, you know. Can you imagine it? He must be crazy."

"It is probably mere gossip," I returned.

"Probably," he answered, "for how could a man marry a woman like that? I don't recognise the necessity. There is only one kind of woman that I can imagine marrying—the woman who keeps a man at arm's length—at arm's length—

in spite of himself. I have never met one —one who can look you in the eyes with a will as strong as your own; but when I do, mark you, Robin, there will be murder done—or she will be Mistress George Grafton."

CHAPTER XIII

In March Lord Bedford came down from London and carried George off with him to Spain, and I took the opportunity to visit my people in Scotland. It was not a very happy sojourn, the threads of life which had formerly held me close to mine own people having been sadly loosed by continued absence on my part, and by the many changes which had come to them. It was with a feeling of youth having gone from me forever that I retraced my footsteps to Paris, where, according to arrangement, I was to meet the runaways. There were letters awaiting me there from Lady Elinor and Sir William, telling me of the Virginia on-goings, saying, also, that by

advices from Lord Bedford, who had written them from Spain, he was planning to return to Fairfax House when George and I should be coming home.

According to these advices, several weeks must yet elapse before George would be again in Paris. I was settling myself for an evening of a pleasant kind of lonesomeness, getting my traps into some sort of shape, in our old rooms with the lights lighted, and a brisk fire burning, when I heard a rap at the door, and, opening it, discovered Lord Bedford.

It was the first time since the night of the birth of Master George that we had been alone together. It might seem that this was an impossibility, considering the interwovenness of our interests; but when two people are sincerely determined to avoid each other, the chances for much mutual intercourse are slight. This determination we had both held. There was,

therefore, an embarrassment in his manner as he entered, although our greetings were friendly enough.

"You are but newly arrived from Scotland?" he asked.

"This morning," I answered briefly.

"The weather is moist as usual, I suppose."

"Fit to swim in," I responded.

"When did George get back?" he asked.

"George!" I cried in some amazement. "Is he back? I have not seen him. He is not here."

"Not here!" he repeated. "He left me nearly three weeks ago at Rome. By Jove!" he went on in anger, and yet with a gleam of humour in his eye. "It is the Masham woman."

"It is doubtless some woman, be his whereabouts known or unknown."

"Which shows you, Mr. Killduff, to be

a gentleman of some penetrations," Lord Bedford answered with a laugh. "I assure you my six weeks have not been unoccupied, and I have felt that your last months must have brought you many wearing moments."

"They have not been entirely wanting," I returned.

"George is a problem surely, and one which I state openly is beyond my solving."

"He is an unusual person," I responded, "both in his gifts and his faults."

"There can be no gainsaying that," said Lord Bedford, "and one I might mention whom, for many reasons, I am particularly interested in."

He had been smoking, and as he said this he occupied himself with his pipe—a little, I thought, to avoid my glance. I made no response whatever. It was an occasion which required a very nice con-

duct to make the situation endurable to either of us. We were both remembering and wishing, I speak for myself at least, that we could both forget.

"We have had many talks during the travelling, George and I," Lord Bedford went on. "You will doubtless see the humour of the situation when I tell you that I even tried to remonstrate with him on some occasions. These remonstrances ended in arguments in which I was ever the one worsted, because of a peculiar lack in him of, I might call it conscience, only it is a harder thing to name. It seems almost as though he had no standards whatever——" He was certainly playing very near to the fire in this speech, and he felt it, for he drew off and said: "If there be any one who can help him, it is surely you, Mr. Killduff. I have it from his own lips that he has more respect for your opinions than for those of any other man on earth. In

the very last talk we had, he said to me: 'You know a good deal of the world, Lord Bedford, but you are never a man for any one to tie to. Now Mr. Killduff is as sure as the fixed stars. He does not amuse me so well as you. I do not find him so charming, I have never imitated him unconsciously as I have done you, but, before Heaven, I respect him more!' Think of it, Mr. Killduff, you and I are both over forty, and this rascal of twenty sits up and compares us and tosses off his notes and tells us what he thinks of us with the coolness of an equal if not a superior age. I find the situation humorous."

"It is not so droll to live with as for a six weeks' jaunt," I answered, "and I fear me sometimes for what may happen to George Grafton if there be found no way to deal with him. There is in him, as you say, a peculiar lack of conscience. I re-

member only too well the intellectual wrestle I had with him recently when I made the statement to him that almost any man would defend a woman against another man, but that it took a very fine gentleman to protect a woman from himself." I hated this man so that, although the shot was unconsciously made, I was glad to see that it hit home. "He has, so far as I know," I went on after a while, "been crossed in nothing in his life. It is ill for a man to be so raised, and he neither has self-control nor can he be made to see the necessity for it. When I think of his future, it is with fear for those who love him."

There was a kind of sadness about Lord Bedford as he sat and talked which was unusual to the man, and showed him not altogether devoid of heart. This intimacy with George had taught him many things which he would have been happier

not to know, I make sure, for as he rose to go he said :

" He will find for himself later that we pay for the mistakes of our youth. Well, I will be bidding you good-night, and will look in upon you again before I go to London to see if the delinquent has arrived." I lighted him down the stairs, and came back to my fireside with the thought that he had come to me for something of which, by reason of my knowledge of him, he was ashamed to speak, and the morsel was sweet to my palate as I sat before the fire.

CHAPTER XIV

I BRING my lady's story down now to what I may rightly term the beginning of the close. It was in the early fall of eighteen hundred and twenty-two. At the arrival of the English mail on the morning of October the twentieth of this year the trouble of the end began. There had been frequent writings, back and forth, to the old country about the visiting us of a certain Miss Anne Page Dulany, the only daughter of Captain Dulany's younger brother. These projected visits had been talked of among us many times, and, having come to naught, had grown to be greatly joked about in the family. They would say that Master George was going

to begin his serious studying "when Anne comes," or that Lord Bedford would stop running the horses "when Anne comes," or such like, meaning an imagined future which was never expected to arrive.

This Miss Anne's father had married, while stationed in Spain, a Spanish lady of some wealth and great beauty, who died the first year of their union, leaving him a heart saddened for life and a little daughter. This child was the Miss Anne Page Dulany for whom so many budgets were sent to her home in Scotland from our place, and who came among us for our sins this day of which I write. It was a fine, breezy morning, with a plain even blue in the heavens and the mountain line showing hard against the sky. My lady was on the terrace feeding the peacocks, which were making a frightful to-do about her. Lord Harry (who was at Fairfax House and had ridden over to us in time

for breakfast) and Master George were using the foils, standing without coats or waistcoats just by the steps of the veranda. Sir William, whose gout was unusually bad, and I were having a game of chess, and though it be but a bit of garrulity here, I desire to mention in justice to myself that these games were one of the crosses of my life, for I think Sir William was the worst player in the whole country, ever returning undaunted to the board, and to the end seeming bitterly surprised and amazed at each new game he was beaten.

Suddenly the figure of a girl turned into the laurel walk. She wore a cloak of scarlet-coloured tabby velvet, the hood thrown back from her head. She had dark hair, a dusky skin, and great gray eyes, and gave an impression of extraordinary beauty and brightness. She came directly toward us, with no more self-consciousness than a

bird, and, with a gleam of white teeth and scarlet lips, said, in a voice full of music, "You are all my new cousins, aren't you?"

We rose to greet her, Lord Bedford and Master George coming forward with the foils in their hands to pay their respects to this girl, who, I believe to this day, carried a kind of bewitchment about her.

"I left the others," she said, "and came forward to introduce myself," and then, with what would have been abruptness in another, but in her seemed only natural and expressive, she continued: "It is so beautiful here. It makes me think of the *hacienda*."

She seemed as completely at home, where she had curled herself down on the steps, as if she had been among us for years, and I have seen the ladies, who came but a few miles in their coaches to make us an afternoon visit, more upset by

the journey than she seemed by her travel across the Atlantic Ocean. She drank the tea we gave her with enjoyment, laughed at the dismal Chinese figure on the cup, and looked at the distant mountains with her great gray eyes as though she had contemplated naught else since childhood.

"Consuelo will be around in a minute," she continued, flecking some crumbs to the sparrows. "Consuelo is my father and mother and all my kin—in her own esteem. She is, in reality, an old nurse turned into my maid, who has few principles and less English. She is a dreadful liar, and I have heard she killed one of her children; otherwise she is thoroughly estimable."

I can set down the words, but feel my inadequacy to convey the fine sense of humour she was able to put into this speech, and she had noticeably, as I afterward found, a distinction of language,

making an old word to shine by this gift as though it were a jewel in a new setting.

"Father has gone to Africa again," she said, in answer to Sir William's inquiries, "a new part. I always went with him before, but this time he refused to take me. He has gone among the tribes where they eat strange women, so the force of his argument in favour of my staying away appealed to me. The last time I was there," she went on, the rest of us in a bewilderment about her, "a large negro chief expressed his entire willingness to marry me. He was ready to waive colour distinction, he said." Here there was a lowering of the lids and an undue gravity. "My father told him that he did me too much honour, and that my spirit would sink beneath it. Realizing the naturalness of my timidity, he encouraged me with this; and allowed me to depart." She stretched forth her hand and showed

us a yellow diamond, the largest stone I think I ever saw worn, set in yellow, yellow gold.

She laughed a little at the remembrance, and then, rising at some meaning gesture of my lady's that her rooms were ready, there being some small delay there, for at the end her coming was unexpected, she said, with the same charming frankness: "You have found out already that I talk too much, haven't you?—so I shall go away with my cousin Elinor, who is the beautifulest woman in the world. I know you all now," she said, with the prettiest grace possible; "this is Sir William Grafton, cousin to me by marriage with Elinor Dulany; this is my cousin George, made in the likeness of his Majesty George IV; this is Mr. Killduff; and this is—" she stopped in front of Lord Bedford and smiled in his face with those wonderful gray eyes of hers, and hesitated.

"Lord Bedford, our friend and yours," my lady interpolated.

"Will you really be my friend?" she said, reaching out her hand to him; and after a minute's contemplation she added, "You look as if you need a friend yourself, my lord."

This coming of Anne made a new era in our lives. I could write for days of the stories she told us of court and camp, for she had followed her father in his soldiering through many of the countries of the world; but it would go little way toward setting forth her great audacity and charm. She had, as none other I have ever known, a gift in her way with men. High born or low, good or bad, drunken or sober, she held them, as it were, in the hollow of her hand. She knew the world, weighed its worth with the wisdom of a serpent and the heart of a little child, and one knew that here there would be no throw-

ing of the cap over the wind-mills for love.

It was with a kind of joy that I found she spoke a good Scottish dialect whenever she grew very angry. She had lived some of her most impressionable years in Scotland, she told us, adding, with a smile: "You would be surely finding it out when I get angry. It's a bonny tongue to call names in—the Scot."

From the first it was Master George who was her chosen friend and comrade, and this fell the more naturally because of their youth and their music. Having great skill on the violin, on which instrument her performance exceeded that of Master George, although he played fine too, with Lady Elinor at the piano, the two would spend whole mornings at their music, the house ringing with the sweet sounds.

Here Lord Bedford would frequently join them, singing in his mellow voice to

their accompaniment some of Mr. Burns's or Mr. Moore's love songs, and, altogether, it seemed as though the happiest days of our lives were going forward at Deepdeen.

It was of Henry Bedford's relations with Miss Anne that I would now be dealing, for, from the very first speech that she ever made to him, he was drawn toward her, I could see, and that with no small attraction. I could see also that it piqued him in no small degree that she made no moment of him either one way or the other; forgetting him when he was gone, and remembering him only when her eyes alighted on him anew.

There was a day to come, however, when there fell a change in behaviour between them. Miss Anne had made ready in the scarlet cloak and hood to go forth for a romp with the dogs. She was standing with them frolicking around her on the lawn, when she espied Lord Bedford com-

ing over the foot-bridge. There was an unsteadiness in his gait, which made her watch him uneasily, and then, the power being on her, she went to meet him. They came together in the lilac walk, she with the distinction of a mission in her carriage, he, with his bloated face and eyes glazed by drink, regarding her unsteadily and with much deprecation, being further gone in his drunkenness than I had ever before seen him.

"I think shame on you, my lord!" she said, the colour burning through her face. "Ye poor, childish thing! Ye poor feckless creature, that hasna yet gotten the self-control of a man! Sit ye down here and keep yourself away from the eyes of them that would be shamed by your coming."

My lord was not so far gone but that he was stung to the quick, and as he wavered into a seat he stammered forth some excuse of trouble that she knew not of.

"Trouble!" she retorted, with fine scorn, "and is it thus ye bear your trouble? Ye deaden your senses because ye canna look in the face what life has broughten ye! An I were a man I wouldna cross swords with ye for a' the world." And then, with a fierce kind of scorn, "Ye coward!"

Lord Bedford was shamed into a partial sobriety by these words, or the unexpectedness of the attack, or the ecstasy of indignation which burned in the girl; and some hours later, when he was able to mount his horse to ride back to Fairfax House, he seemed as one who was going home to think.

From that very day the change between them set in, and I made sure that Miss Anne had handled many a one of her father's drunken friends ere this; and steadily from that time I could see Lord Bedford drifting farther and farther toward

her, bewitched, bedeviled, irritated, soothed, dismayed, but ever interested.

Twice I saw her put her hand before him and turn his glasses down at dinner, looking at him as she did so through eyes which never doubted their own power; and another time she took him from the table when the ladies left, but how that was done I could not tell.

Nor was it alone on his sins of commission that she dwelt, but on those of omission as well; and one day being in sky-scraping spirits, when there was naught that she would stickle at to say to him—or to any one else for the matter of that—she came down from her practising to find him playing at billiards with Master George.

"Where are you going, Anne?" Lord Bedford called out after her as she passed the door. She turned and looked at him for a moment, with merriment and a lawless kind of candour in her eye, before she

answered: "Where you will soon be unable to go at all, my lord. I am going to *think*. How can you," she went on in a fire of impatience, "go on as ye do? Ye bear a name older than your king's; your people have been the great of the earth since Charlemagne; ye had gifts at your birth second to none; and ye ride after the little foxes, and push balls over a green cloth, and roar at the fighting of chickens, and sit around the house like an old mother. Thank Heaven! I've known some men in my time, else I might think ye one; and so, good-morning to ye, my lord!" and she was gone, with her wild spirits and her great beauty, through the doorway before Lord Bedford could make the answer which I think he intended.

Whether Lady Elinor noticed Miss Anne's conduct toward Lord Bedford, or his toward her, I did not know at this time. She knew naught of the other women in

his life, however, and doubtless felt so sure of his twenty years' allegiance to her that she probably thought little of his attentions to Miss Anne one way or another; or, if she noted their intimacy at all, was pleased to observe that it kept him from the drink, and that he seemed more like his earlier self than he had done for years.

It was hard, too, for Lady Elinor to judge Miss Anne in anything, for there was never a greater difference between women than that between Miss Anne and Lady Elinor, whose pride and reserve made it well-nigh impossible for her to do many things which Miss Anne would consider her very duty.

It is difficult in the extreme to set these two women side by side, to compare, even if my memory were more dispassionate than it is. Miss Anne showed every mood in every curve of her lightsome body, in every line of her beautiful face, and this,

too, with a power of language to be remembered at some length. Sorrow, scorn, mirth, or joy, whatever emotion swayed her (and she was seldom either motionless or emotionless), she showed forth with a kind of theatric lawlessness; yet underneath it all was a woman who could never yield herself to any man save at the altar's foot.

With Lady Elinor the case was different. She had such an idea of high conduct that to show strong emotion in public seemed grossly presumptuous toward others, besides admitting them to an intimacy from which her very nature shrank. Yet where her heart spake there was ever a yielding, and she gave with no thought at all of self in the giving.

One morning, in the third month of Miss Anne's stay among us, Master George announced at luncheon, to the guests, who numbered perhaps twenty, that there would be a "grand entertainment" in the large

drawing-room that evening at eight. "The management," he explained mockingly, after the manner of showmen, "had spared neither pains nor expense in presenting the famous Spanish dancer, Elita del Espana, and the celebrated troubadour, Don Camillo d'Arcos, to their Worshipful Highnesses at Deepdeen"; and, as he turned to leave the room, he added, with an infectious laugh, "A collection will be taken up for the benefit of a poor young man who is always in debt," and, with a droll look at his mother, he disappeared into the hall, where Miss Anne was waiting for him.

By night a goodly company, most of them staying with us, some of them hastily bidden from the country-side, had assembled in front of a mimic stage; Sir William, who ever showed at his best when acting as host, having been wheeled near the door to welcome his guests as they entered, his glances passing from the boy

George, whom he loved so fondly, to the wife whom he adored, who stood beside his chair.

There was no great difficulty in getting an abundance of good music, Lady Elinor, Master George, and Miss Anne being in such constant rehearsal that there was little for them to do in the way of preparation, save to decide the compositions which would be best received. Several such numbers were given before Lord Bedford, looking very distinguished and poetic, sang, in Spanish costume, some delightful songs of troubadour kind; but the great surprise was at the end, when, after the curtain had been dropped for some minutes, it rose again to the sound of the *bolero* music, while to the middle of the stage glided a most lovely vision—a girl, clad in white and silver, with scarlet roses in her dusky hair, and the lace of a mantilla dropping down from a high comb.

She advanced well to the front, the pride of youth in every move; the haughtiness of Spain, the consciousness of power, in every glance of her eyes. As for the dance itself, I had not then, nor have I since, seen it equalled; it was not a contortion of limbs without meaning or expression, such as most dancing is, but told its story well and fully.

Upon being recalled with much clapping of hands and "*bravas*" from the gentlemen, Miss Anne came back to dance again; and this time it was the dance of bewitchment, the dance of Herodias's daughter, I make sure. I could see in it a man, led on to expect all, rejected, flouted, teased; there was a humour to make one laugh aloud in the manner of walking away from this imaginary person, looking backward over her shoulder, with a rose held between her lips; and the complete surrender at the end, regardless of honour or consequences.

It was just at the close, when every one was more or less carried away by the excitement of it, that I glanced across at Lord Bedford. He was standing near the stage, and, as I scanned his face, I saw in his eyes the look of passion and determination I had seen in them twenty years before, in the lilac walk at Deepdeen, the first time he had seen my lady.

The joy of the evening was gone for me, and after the guests had retired I went into the library to be alone for a little. As I stood looking into the fire I heard a small noise behind me, and turning, found Master George lying at full length on one of the couches, a rose between his fingers, staring up at the ceiling; never before had I seen him look so handsome, although there was a madness in his eye as in one who had loosed the bonds of moral obligation.

"Well, man Robin," he said, as he saw

who I was, "what did you think of her? Isn't she wonderful?" and as he came over and put his hand on my shoulder I thought, with a grim smile, of the surprises Fate keeps up her sleeve for us all, to speak rudely; for here were father and son gone daft over the same woman, who, so far as I could see, cared not a button for either.

It was soon after this dance evening that Lady Elinor, Sir William, and Master George received an invitation from President and Mrs. Monroe to visit them, in order to be present at a great ball to be given in honour of some English folk who were staying with them. Sir William ever held the President in high esteem, besides knowing that it was great wisdom to keep in touch with the administration on account of the interests in the North which must ever be thought of; so for both reasons the family accepted the invitation with great pleasure. It was not until later

that I discovered that Lord Bedford, too, had been bidden, but had sent back some flimsy excuses about his health as a reason for remaining away. It was arranged that Madame Dulany should come over to Deepdeen and keep Miss Anne company during the family's absence.

The afternoon of the day before the family were to set forth, Miss Anne had come into the house flushed and merry from a long walk over the hills. She was wrapped up in sealskin, the brown of the fur setting forth her face so that it seemed to shine with a kind of radiance as she put her curly head, which was covered with a scarlet fez, through the door.

Master George had but just come in from the stables, where he had been leaving some final orders about the horses. Seeing him standing in front of the fire, she said, "I want my tea," with the petulance of a child. He laughed at her, for

the ill humour was but acting on her part, and, going over to her, said something which I could see startled her greatly, though she followed him, evidently at his request, into the hall. Here they talked at some length—he with much earnestness of manner and a ring of great sincerity in his speech. It was not long after that I heard her laugh aloud and say gaily :

"You! Why, you're nothing but a broth of a boy."

"I am older than you," he responded.

"Years have nothing to do with age in a woman. I am fifty in experience. It is written, 'A man may not marry his grandmother.'"

Through it all it was plainly evident that she could regard Master George but as a lad, and his infatuation for herself as nothing but a boyish fancy which should not be taken seriously, lest it should make it seem

of more importance to himself than it really was. As it turned out, it would have been far wiser had she treated the matter as one of more importance, and refused Master George once for all, as a woman does a man, and not allowed him to ride away to Washington believing, as he did, that she had but teased him with a refusal which at some later date might be turned into an acceptance.

The party set off the following morning in a coach and six, with outriders, my lady's luggage (for there was much necessary to make the stoppage at the two inns endurable) being taken behind in a covered wagon. Master George was to ride alongside on his own horse.

Lady Elinor stood at the door a minute in her great black velvet hat and cloak for some little talk with us who were to remain at home. Miss Anne was giving her message after message for the President from

the steps outside, where she and Lord Bedford were standing.

"Tell Mr. Monroe that I am well. He will be lying awake nights worrying else; and to Mrs. Monroe, say that my salmon-coloured tabby velvet has a hole in the hem—which I burned—but that my father thinks I am becoming, on the whole, a bit steadier in my conduct."

"Your father is the more deceived then, madcap," Lady Elinor said, smiling fondly down on the little thing. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye — good-bye — good-bye —" Miss Anne called, as the coach drove away. "Bring me a present."

CHAPTER XV

It was the Friday after the family's return from this Washington visit which began the bad trouble for us all. Early in the day I was out overlooking the kennels, when Master George, accompanied by a disreputable bitch pointer which he had ruined teaching tricks, turned into the path from the stables. Although his face was smiling, it was with a rather anxious eye that he returned my salutation.

"Are you busy, Robin," he inquired, "or have you time to talk to the idle-born?"

"What is the trouble now, sir?" I asked, knowing his usual method of com-

ing to me for help only, either in money matters or love affairs.

"There is," he answered, with laughter held in his eyes, "a certain uncomplimentary insinuation in your question. We will waive that, however. Man Robin, I *am* in trouble."

"Who is it this time?"

The young rake looked at me for a moment, and there was that of his mother in his look which made me say less than I thought as he answered, "Caddie Brown."

The Browns were some decent people who had been on the place but a short time, the man to have charge of the stock, in which matters he was well informed, and the wife and daughter to assist in the knitting and weaving. The girl Caddie was a handsome, lazy lass, who had had an eye for Master George from her first sight of him. This I had noted from the start.

He sat on the edge of an old box, slap-

ping his boots with his riding crop, and told the story with an impersonality which bewildered me.

"She was a taking body," he said, "and one day I met her in the far wood. This was really by accident, at least so far as I was concerned. The next day I went again. This visit was intentional. I wanted to see if she would come. I found her there in some sort of thin blue gown. This day I kissed her when we parted, and told her she must never come again, that she was too handsome a woman for me to see much of; that her blue eyes might make sad havoc. By George! they were fine eyes! Well, of course, we met again, and again, and yet again, and there's trouble coming. Her mother knows. Twice she has threatened to come to my mother about it, and I greatly fear she will. I thought, perhaps, that you would help me, Robin."

"It's bad business, George," I answered. "It is no light matter to ruin a woman's life."

"Bosh!" he answered; "her life is not ruined. People always take these things too seriously. Give her plenty of money, send her away until after the child is born; some small farmer will marry her, and she will probably forget the whole affair in a few years."

"Boy," I said sternly, "in affairs of this kind you seem to have the moral sense of animals only. I have helped you oftener already than my conscience stands easy under. You will attend to this matter alone."

"Then," he said, looking up at me slyly, "my mother will surely know." He knew his power over me—had always known it.

"Well," I yielded, "I will try to hush this matter up. I will do what I can. Shall I go to see these people?"

"It might be best. It's damned awkward coming just now, for if Anne should know, she'll probably raise the devil of a row."

"I don't think she would mind it as much as most women would," I answered.

"Why?" he asked.

"Well, she knows more of men's ways than any woman I have ever known, and personally I believe it would interest her none at all. She will"—and the irritation in me showed itself in this—"she will, to my thinking, be marrying Lord Bedford before long."

"Bedford!" he retorted; "why, he's old enough to be her father."

"It makes no difference," I answered stolidly; "it is he that she will be marrying, and it's little, one way or the other, she will think of your light loves, George Grafton."

I was outdone with him to such an extent that there was much I intended saying, when he rose to his feet, and, turning a little away from me, said, with a knowing smile and something sneering, "It's you that ought to know about such things, Robin—you who have been in love with another man's wife these twenty years," and, taking his brainless dog with him, he turned on his heel and left me.

It was but a few hours later that, coming down the hall, I heard voices from the breakfast-room. A woman was speaking in an excited way, yet I caught a note of pleading in the tone, too.

"If it were not," the voice said, "for fear of her father, we would ask no favours, me and my daughter; we have our pride as well as others."

My lady was standing, as I entered, with her back to me, and the woman Brown, whose eyes were red with weeping,

stood by one of the serving-tables. As I came forward the woman looked at me with ill-concealed irritation at the interruption. My lady saw the look, although she kept her eyes averted from me, and her face was very pale.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Brown," I said, as courteously as I could. "You must spare my lady's presence for a minute.—Master George would like to see you, Lady Elinor," I continued, "in the smoking-room."

She left me alone with the snivelling, small woman, and I spoke quickly, and with what force I was able.

"There is a very generous allowance to be made for you and your daughter," I broke forth, "if this matter comes not to my lady's ears. Money will be forthcoming for her departure from this place, which will prevent her disgrace being known — money to live in comfort for

the rest of your lives, for both of you, if I can be sure of your silence."

Mrs. Brown hesitated a minute, and I asked, "What is it that you have already said?"

"I have told her that my daughter's condition is due to one who is very near to her, and have asked help in concealing the affair from my man, who, as you know, is one of fierce temper and bad to rouse."

"You have," I said, "mentioned no names?"

"I have not."

"Are you willing," I asked, "to trust the management of this affair to me, for a few days longer at least? I will walk down to your house with you, and we will discuss a plan. I speak for Master George, you know."

It needed little persuasion, and after an hour's visit the affair was settled between us. I but drag it into the pages of this

story to show the curious effect it had on my life. When I came back to the house my lady was sitting in the mullioned window reading. The stained glass behind her made her look like some fair saint, and as I came toward her I noticed that her eyes were wet with tears.

"It is all settled," I said as brightly as I could. "I can not for my life understand how every trouble for miles around is brought to you, save that your generous heart and big nature tell people who will help them in their hour of need."

She kept her eyes from me during this speech, and there was something of an awkward pause before she arose. Coming toward me, she put one hand on my shoulder, and said with great gentleness and sweetness, but with a sob in her voice: "Between you and me, Robin, there need be no dissimulation. I would help you in any way I could—in any matter. Only,"

and the tears welled up in her eyes, "you have been so nearly my ideal of manhood —there has been in your conduct naught but of the finest — that this thing has brought with it such a shock as I think I shall never get over. You have all but broken my heart, Robin Killduff."

My lower jaw actually dropped, and my eyes stared at her in a kind of imbecility, as it dawned on me of what she thought.

"You loved her, didn't you, Robin? Oh, tell me at least that you love her, and will marry her!"

I stammered forth some lame excuse as the truth broke over me. Thanks to the vagueness of Mrs. Brown, my lady had picked me out as the culprit. No explanation seemed adequate just then. There was none other, save Master George, to bear the shame if I denied it. I knew of a trouble coming to her which would

almost crush her proud spirit. I thought of her absolute belief in George as a model of all the virtues, she being ever love-blinded where her son was concerned, and what I did, if foolish, was at least for love of her.

"I will marry her," I said, "if she wishes me to."

"It is the least you can do," my lady returned, wiping her eyes. "I am glad you will try to do what is right. We have ever loved you so, Robin, that I feel the shame of this almost as though it were George himself."

I turned and left the room some minutes later, and found George smoking on the front steps.

"Well," he said, with his merry smile, "I have been waiting around to apologize, old man, for the nasty speech I made to you this morning. But every one sees you are in love with my mother; God knows, I think it's fine! I am not capable of such

a thing myself. It seems a bit foolish, but still it's fine. I think you have something of the hero about you, Robin Killduff."

I smiled at him grimly.

"One would need to have who lived with you," I answered, and strode back to the stables.

'Twas perhaps two o'clock of this same damned Friday that the affair of Henry Bedford and Miss Anne was made known to my Lady Grafton in the manner which I set down word for word, as it was put into her journal that same night.

"If I only can write it forth! If God will only give me strength to set it all down, it may ease this clutch at my heart, which seems to be killing me minute by minute. I have felt the change, a little at a time, coming—coming; but I deluded myself into the belief it was but that we were both growing older. This afternoon

I sat with my embroidery in the great window. My heart was sore enough, God knows, because of this news of Robin and Caddie Brown. Life seemed so strange, so unknowable, when from the music-room Anne came. She was all in white ; she had been in the conservatory and had some stalks of white flowers in her hands, and as she came toward me she walked through the scattered spots of coloured light which lay on the floor from the stained glass of the windows. Before she spoke, I knew—we Irish have something, I believe, that other races have not—I knew my retribution was at hand. She sat down beside me and said with pretty thoughtfulness, 'You are not well, my beautiful cousin. You have a headache? You don't want to be bothered with me now?'

"'You never bother any one, Anne,' I answered ; 'you have grown to be the sunshine of the house.'

"'I am going to tell you a long story,' she went on. 'I want some advice. There is no one for me to come to, save you. There is none other to whom I would rather come than you, if I had the choice of the whole world. You are—so good—so fine—so true! I want to be a woman just like you some day, Cousin Elinor.' She leaned over and kissed my cheek, and I put my arm around her, but she drew away.

"'No,' she said, 'I want to tell this story out bravely; not leaning on any one.' A flush came into her face like a carmine rose. 'It is of my Lord Bedford I am going to speak.'

"'It is a good subject, I am sure,' I said, and I forced my eyes to rest in hers for a second.

"'It was not,' she went on, 'until the night of the dance that I ever thought of him much; but that night before I went to sleep I remembered his eyes as they looked

when he bade me good-night. There was scarce a word passed between us after that till the day you left us. I had been practising, when he suddenly came to the window and called me from the porch. I smiled and shook my head. Two or three minutes later he came to the inside door. There was a look in his eyes, a masterfulness in his manner, which I had never before seen. With a certain sureness in his smile he finally broke forth. "If I were to tell you that I love you, Anne, what would you say?"

"'"'Say'?" I responded. "I should say it were your very duty, considering what a lovable person I am." I had no thought but that he was jesting.

"'"'Ah! you have been much spoiled. You shall be disciplined. It is I that shall be the instrument in the hands of Providence. I have come to take you for a walk."

"'"Ask me then," I said, "politely, with a touch of ceremony, and as if you thought I might refuse, perhaps. Then I may go."

"'He came nearer to me and put forth his hand. "Come," he said.

"'In that one word the change for all my life was made. I put down my violin and went with him, over by the Sunset Rocks.

"'There was that haste about our courtship which makes me wonder sometimes that I could have yielded so easily. In a week's time— You remember the great walnut-tree, Cousin Elinor?'

"The old walnut-tree! Was it there he told his love? There, where he kissed me first, and life's water turned to wine at the miracle of the touching of his lips!

"'The old one by the brook?' I asked.

"'Yes, it was there. Dear, I suppose no woman really tells what a man—the man she loves—says to her then, do you? But

it all happened there, and it was there he told me the story of his life's tragedy. It is of that I wish to speak. It is about that I must be advised. I am not yet betrothed to Lord Bedford. I have not given my word, for there is another woman who must be considered. I had felt that there was a great sorrow in his life, and before he asked me to become his wife he said he would tell me of it and let me judge.

"'When he was much, much younger—twenty-three or four—he fell in love with a great lady who was married. He said she was of royal line; that she was most beautiful, that she loved him in return. He went away from England, he left the place, he tried hard to forget her; but once, by some ill chance, they were thrown together (there being no thought between them, save that each should forever avoid the other), and—the shame of it hurts all there

is of me—there was a child born to them. He says, still says, that she was not a bad woman. How can he say that? Do you see, Cousin Elinor?'

"'Anne,' I said, laying down my work and taking both her hands in mine, 'if the woman had never loved any one else; if he vowed that, as God judged them, they were man and wife; if all the compelling presence which he has he brought to bear on this girl, who loved him so that life was but one dark shadow without the sunshine of his smile—could you see how she might have yielded to him without being really a *bad* woman?'

"Anne shook her head. 'You are so good, you try to make excuses for everybody!' she returned. 'I can not see how a woman who *loves* a man can lower him in his own estimation. She was another man's wife. She had taken vows which were hers to fulfil. She had no choice.

She dragged another man's honour in the dust. Look at Lord Bedford's life as a result of this love affair—no acknowledged ties, no love. Ah! The barrenness of that I feel I never can forgive. She was a woman simply dominated by animal passions, as a woman should never be. I am very hard, I suppose, but I feel'—and she reached out her hand and laid it in mine again—'as if I never could touch a woman like that.'

"I felt the shiver in my body which they say presageth death, but said no more. I knew my love was to hers as the sea to a river—yet what so heavy as words?

"'He has fretted under this tie for a number of years,' she continued. 'He has at times wished to free himself; that is no doubt the reason which has made him live so much out of England, as it is there she lives. He told me all, keeping back only names. He says that he has made

vows to the other woman which it will be hard to break; but that he is willing, if I think it best, to go to her and tell her all; ask for his freedom; speak of his love for me.

"'I have come to you, dear cousin, not only because I love you, but because I believe in your wisdom, and then, too, because I think you love me a little, to ask you what you think wisest for us to do.'

"'I see only one way. If he has ceased to love the other woman, whatever tie there was between them is already dissolved. There is naught for her to do but release him. It is the spirit that holds, not the letter. She can not bind him to her by cold-grown vows when his love for her is past.'

"'You think it right? He has made promises, too, Cousin Elinor.'

"'He can not fulfil them if he loves another woman.'

"'Have you known of this before?' she asked, looking searchingly at me with those clear eyes of hers.

"'Yes.'

"'Is it known generally?'

"'No, there is, besides myself, but one other this side of the Atlantic who knows of it all.'

"'Do you know her?'

"'I have seen her.'

"'She is beautiful?'

"'She has been called so, but you must remember how long ago this was. She is old enough to be your mother, child.'

"'You think, then, I have the right to accept him?'

"'Every right. I believe—nay, dear, I know—I know, I can speak for her—the other woman would wish it so.'

"'May I kiss you, Cousin Elinor? Oh, do you know,' she said, with the carmine roses coming back to her cheeks, 'do you

know what it is to love as I do? When nothing in life seems real but the touch of one pair of hands, the look of one pair of eyes, the sound of one voice, when there is nothing—nothing but him?'

"I turned and took her in my arms. 'I have known, Anne,' I said, 'believe me, I have known. It is that which makes life beautiful.'

"We kissed each other, and I came up here to be alone. To be alone—alone, with every fibre of my being quivering with a great pain, and memories that will not down. Oh, for the gift of a large forgetting!

"I remember our first meeting. 'An I dream what I would, I pray to sleep forever.' The apple orchard! The time we pretended we were boy and girl!

"'When you grow up I am to marry you, you know,' he said, sitting above me on a bough of an apple-tree, which was all in bloom, 'and hurry up, because I can not

wait long.' And the two miserable years of separation, and the time we met again at the Stanley-Masons—O God! God! God! if you see, if you can hear me, give me back just three days of my life—just three mad, headlong, passionate days!

"I remember one night when he came to my room. I was waiting for him. I wore a rose-coloured dressing-gown, which he had admired, and was standing by the west window.

"'Come over here,' he said, as he seated himself in the big chair by the fire. 'Come over here. I am your tyrant, your king. Take down your hair.'

"I unbound my hair. 'Kneel to me; turn your face up toward mine. I do not like that thing up around your throat—undo it—so. You love me? There is no other thought in life, no other memory, you *see* no other man with those soft eyes? There is not in your heart one beat for any

soul that liveth, save for me? I am—all—all? Tell me so!'

"I have tried to be so good, but I see now it was not real. There was always the hope that some day I should have the reward of being really his wife. I think this news has driven me a bit daft. The past whirls through my brain and I must forget; must have the courage to face the world with. I lived when I believed him dead. I will try to think of him again that way."

That same afternoon, during which Miss Anne had told her story, she set forth on horseback. When she returned Lord Bedford was riding beside her, and after they had dismounted they stood talking together on the steps, with the moon shining full upon them both.

"When is it to be?" he asked.

"When do you want it?" Miss Anne inquired.

"When do I want it? Now. To-night. This minute. I want you, Anne!"

"As you make the observe yourself sometimes, Lord Bedford, 'It will fall as it will fall.' Good-night."

"Kiss me, Anne."

She leaned toward him as though to comply, and then, suddenly throwing back her head, she laughed and said, "It is a good thing for you to go a-wanting sometimes, my lord," with which sage remark she turned and left him. It is thus she has held him ever since.

There is an interval of four days before my lady wrote again in the journal. The third day after this talk with Miss Anne she had an interview with Lord Bedford, with whom she had communicated.

"I am too proud to show much feeling to any one on the subject of an unrequited affection, and it was this pride that gave

me a kind of fortitude throughout the interview. Lord Bedford came to see me, at my own request, in the library. He was pale and his eyes were lighter and less direct in their glance than usual. I smiled at him as we took each other's hands.

"'Be seated,' I said. 'You are unhappy, you are ill at ease, believe me, needlessly. I shall—ah, I hope you know me well enough to feel that I shall not do as other women might. I see the inevitableness of it all. I have not changed. There is not that in my nature, I hope, which would make such a change possible. I loved, love, shall always love you. I want you to know this; there is no excuse for me otherwise. Will you believe me when I say, however, that I am glad for your new happiness—that the new chance in your life brings a finer sort of pleasure to my soul than I could have believed myself capable of? There need be no unnecessary

words between us. If there be any forgiveness from one to another, let us say it is freely granted, and so—good-bye.'

"'George,' Lord Bedford began, and I knew before he spoke the word it was of him he had been thinking.

"'As for my son George, he will have my own private fortune, as well as my mother's, which is large, besides the other (I could not mention Sir William's name then), and of him there is little to worry. He will have plenty of this world's gear, and I have tried, in spite of his parentage, to make a gentleman of him.'

"I wish more than language can tell that I had not said *that.* It seemed so weak, so futile, so womanish, so much as I would not be; but, after all, it was as hard on me as on him.

"'And so,' I said, 'my lord, in the words of the old song, "We have no parting words to say, so part we with a smile."'

I put out my hand, he took it in his. Twice he essayed to speak, then suddenly stooped and kissed it, and so all was over."

The blood in all of me boils as I set this down. Was there nothing in this man's nature to respond to the heights in that of the woman he was thus surrendering?

CHAPTER XVI

THE strain of the time was such as could scarce be borne. Of all the happenings which have since been made clear to me, I, of course, was then in ignorance. At the time Lady Elinor told me of Miss Anne's betrothal there was no slightest gesture, no spoken words from her, other than pleasurable, to betray the news. When I think of that superb courage I am glad to remember that I have never spoken Elinor Grafton's name with my hat upon my head.

The fear of pain for George was the thing which was big in her heart. "He has but set his fancy upon her. It is a thing which will pass," I said.

" I doubt it much. She is his first love. It will go sore with him," she returned.

When I remembered his eyes the morning I made mention of the possibility of such a marriage taking place, I, too, had my fears, but of another sort. From the day of his birth he had been crossed in nothing, and I feared me much that royal morals and royal madness were both his by right of birth.

It was his mother who broke the news to him in his own dressing-room before dinner. I saw her leave the room, pale but quiet, and thought that perchance his being crossed in this thing was a less serious matter than we feared; and at the dinner, which had in a way the air of a betrothal feast, Master George was easy in manner, gay even to boisterousness (a thing I never saw in him before), and carried the affair off with a high hand and something of his mother's spirit.

It was about three o'clock of the same morning that I heard first a scream, then hurried footsteps, and, finally, a heavy knocking at my own door. Opening it hastily, I found my lady standing, trembling, before me.

"The house has been robbed," she said. "Anne is badly injured, and George can not be found. O Robin, do you think——"

She said no more, for with that she dropped, all insensible, at my feet. There were no lights in the halls; I could hear shriekings from the other corridor, but no one was yet visible. Lifting Lady Elinor, I carried her to her own room and laid her on the bed, which I noticed had not been disarranged. Before calling any one I crossed the hall to Master George's rooms. There was a night lamp burning, the window which led to the second piazza, which ran around the house, was

open, and the curtains were blowing far into the room. I stood still in the middle of the room and looked carefully at every object in it. The bed had been made ready for the night, but had not been slept upon. It was easy enough to pull the clothes as though some encounter had taken place. In the alcove I stood again and looked. Here I found the drawer of an Indian cabinet slightly open. I knew what it had contained, and softly pushed it in without further investigation, for by this time the household was all astir. There were lights being carried to and fro, and the noise of hurried footsteps.

Crossing to the ell of the house, I found Consuelo and some of the maids huddled together at Miss Anne's door, through which came the most harrowing shrieks of pain. Entering, I found Miss Anne lying on the bed, the pillows of which, as well as the sheets, were stained

with blood. She was a horrible greenish white, save about the lips and nostrils, which were turned very dark. On the upper part of her left shoulder I found a triangular stab, not larger than half an inch each way. Here it was that my worst suspicions were realized. It was a grim, unchancy kind of thing, that the dagger, which in all probability made the wound, was a poisoned one which Henry Bedford had brought as a present to George the last time he returned to America.

Despatching messengers for Dr. Prout, sending for Madame Dulany, and trying to get the blacks, whose minds were perfectly dishevelled by the catastrophe, into some sort of coherent conduct, filled in the time until Lady Elinor came to the door. Sir William was in such a condition that any sudden shock might be fatal to him, and the entire lonesomeness of this woman

overcame me so that tears fell from my eyes and my face worked as I saw her enter.

By morning the whole place was in a paroxysm of confusion. The wildest stories were afloat. A band of desperadoes, it was said, had broken into the house, Sir William and Lady Elinor had been killed and Mr. George kidnapped, my lady's jewels had been stolen, and the family plate was missing.

There had been several robberies in the neighbourhood around us, and the unsettled condition of the country in itself was sufficient reason for the forming of a local militia which was paid by the richer planters of the community. At its head was Captain Godwin, a man held in much esteem by reason of his services to the States in the War of 1812. So fast does rumour cover the country-side that by seven the following morning a squad of these sol-

diers had been sent from Haddon's Cross Roads, and were stationed as guards all over the place, even to the river bank.

With most diligent search, however, there was no trace of Master George, and though I did all in my power to give the impression that the robbers had some hand in his continued absence, I knew by that night my efforts had been unavailing, and that the general suspicion for the murder, if murder it turned out to be, had fallen on him. Moreover, I had found Consuelo talking at the old wall by the rose garden with the captain of the guard, and could not but think that she had told him some things which she had not found courage to tell us.

It was of this captain of the guard that I had my main fear. The men under him were young, impressionable, and bitterly poor, so that I felt that the management of them would be largely a question of

guineas, but the captain was of a different build. He was a very small man, being something under five feet and a half in height, and little through, but he had that kind of courage which the Almighty plants in the breasts of very little men. His face was seamed and lined and badly sunburned, and he wore a fierce, large mustache, which he stood ever pulling the end of, as he kept watch over the grounds, throwing a glance now and then up at the windows of the house. His eyes were very bright and of a light colour, but it was the peculiar shape of his head that gave me the worry of him as a man to manage, for it had the straight, high forehead and the full curve of those men who have reverence and self-esteem, and the narrowness through the temples of the ones who have a rigid sense of devotion to a conventional idea of duty.

It was toward me that the man's main

suspicion of knowing the whereabouts of Master George turned, and before long I could not stir from the house without running across him, or, on looking up, would find him following me, apparently intent on nothing but the sky and fields. I had, however, the courage of complete innocence, and so would always speak to him cheerily and as a person who has naught to conceal. For three days things went thus. There was but little change in Miss Anne's condition, and, although the fever had abated and the wound was healing, she lay unconscious, with a faint heart-beat and a greenish colour of the skin frightful to behold.

Sir William was still in entire ignorance of all that had happened, his rooms having been searched while he was in a sleep induced by an opiate, which was given at intervals to reduce the pain. Lady Elinor went about the house as usual, a lit-

tle paler but with only a more resolute manner, and the line of the mouth a little drawn, fine in her silence and self-containment.

It was on the morning of the fourth day that some one brought word to her that Uncle Abednego, a negro to whom Madame Dulany had given his freedom and several acres of tobacco land by Buler's Creek, was in the servants' quarters to pay his monthly visit to her. She arose from the library without a word, and, the incident being a usual one, I thought nothing of it. A few minutes later I saw the captain of the guard walking leisurely toward the kitchen grounds, his eyes fixed absently on the landscape, still stroking his huge mustache. It was not above twenty minutes from the time she left that my lady returned with Uncle Abe and the captain himself. "We have had some important information, Mr. Kill-

duff, and the captain wishes to have a talk with you about it," she said to me.

Uncle Abe's story—for it was he who had brought the news—was very brief. It was to the effect (and the truth of it at the time I never doubted) that, about four o'clock on the morning of the attack, five men had passed his home on the creek in a boat; that three of them were sailor men; that the one who sat in the stern he saw plainly. He described him as a man whose right eye was disfigured by a scar which ran around his temple and up to his hair. His eyes were peculiarly dark and dreadful, and he had seemed by his manner, as well as the few spoken words which were heard, to be the one in authority. The fifth person sat in the bow wrapped in a dark cloak and seemed to be a passenger. Uncle Abe had watched the boat out of sight, and the next day had heard that the big sailing vessel, which had been lying for several days at

the mouth of the harbour, had weighed anchor, hoisted sail, and made off at a moment's notice. The name of this vessel was The Virgin Queen.

I confess I was entirely nonplussed at the news. That Mr. George should have been kidnapped in this high-handed fashion seemed to me both reasonless and impossible, but the African's composure and serenity as he told the story left little room for doubt. What Captain Godwin thought was known only to himself, and perhaps the lieutenant under him, with whom I saw him in speech soon afterward.

All that afternoon Abednego lay on the top of the broad south wall, lazy and impressive, with the unemployed ones of his own colour gathered around, listening to his long stories with the pleased countenances of children, and it was not until dusk that, carrying his basket of presents, he was ready to start for his home on

Buler's Creek. It was a long tramp through the woods, but he knew every inch of the way, and, dark or light, I suppose it made little differ to him. Just as he passed beyond the park gates I saw the captain padding along like a cat, not fifty feet behind him.

At dinner Lady Elinor suggested that the captain be asked in to dine with us, the utmost being done by us to present a friendly front to him and his soldiers; but, upon the invitation being extended, word was brought that the captain had gone for a walk and was not yet returned. I thought my lady's face paled at this news, but it was only for a moment, and she regained her usual composure immediately.

It was my night to watch with Sir William, and, as Lady Elinor and I were left together with him, she motioned me to follow her to the dressing-room, and I obeyed. Closing the door behind us very carefully,

she said hurriedly: "George is at Uncle Abednego's. He was found wandering around the woods, insane in his talk, covered with blood and badly wounded, three days ago. He is hidden somewhere in a place which Uncle Abe considers safe for the present, but he is very ill. Can you go to him to-night? Will it be safe? If you think so, Aunt Chloe will be waiting for you by the swinging tree at one o'clock."

She was so wild with anxiety that I feared to tell her of the danger such a visit might bring. There was the risk of running on some of the guard, who already looked on the family with suspicion, or of meeting the captain himself. I concluded, therefore, to temporize.

"You might give me a little while to think it all over," I said. "It is no time for us to be making mistakes. If we ever needed to use our heads, it is certain that we need to use all that there is of them now."

CHAPTER XVII

In the end I concluded it better to run the risk and go than to brook further delay, which might not only end in the loss of Master George's life from lack of proper attendance, but would run more chance of his presence becoming known every day that he remained. I took what simple remedies I could and five bright gold guineas, knowing that a little money frequently adds zeal to attendance; it was my lady herself who brought me the antidote which Dr. Prout had used on Miss Anne.

"I think," she said, "if one can trust an instinct, that the unhappy boy decided to end both their lives at once; that he has probably injured himself, believing, as we

all did, that the poison would produce instant death. This has helped her—it may help him—please God!"

I left her standing outside of Sir William's door with her whole frame shaken by sobs, and fared forth into the night.

It was both moonless and cloudy, with rain-bringing wind scurrying through the little new leaves. I went out by the carriage entrance and close along under the lilac-bushes until I came under the trees. There was no one stirring, and, as I neared the swinging tree, I went quickly forward, my heart beating in my throat, my ears alert for some new danger. There was none, however, and I found Aunt Chloe squatted, like some grim fate, under the tree, expecting me. She spoke no word, but together we plunged into the thicket along the banks of the creek. It was a brisk walk, and many times I stumbled over concealed roots and runners, my feet

having none of the dexterity of hers, but finally, by a swift detour, we turned into the back of the little cabin.

"Wait a minute," she commanded briefly, in a little while reappearing with Uncle Abe, and the three of us set forth again. By what circuitous path we came eventually to our destination I can never tell. It seemed to be either directly up some steep inclines or else down sheer gullies, all of this travelling being done in the blackness of the middle of the night, and with great speed, so that it seemed as the happenings of a dream. Suddenly Uncle Abe stopped, and listened attentively, with his hand to his ear, and then we saw him huddle down with his ear against the ground. Making a motion to Aunt Chloe to proceed and for me to follow her, he crouched like a cat on the earth. I turned to do as he bade, when, like lightning, with the same quick, upward spring that a pan-

ther makes with its hind quarters, I saw Uncle Abe leap into the thicket, heard a fall, and a little later saw him reappear leading some one beside him. It was the captain of the guard.

Knowing that Uncle Abe could more than attend to him, Aunt Chloe and I resumed our journey. It was not much farther, however, before we came to what seemed like a straight wall of rock covered with thick Virginia creeper. Putting the swinging tendrils aside, it proved to be nothing more than a hanging curtain of green which covered the mouth of a cave about twelve feet square. Of its depth into the hillside I could, of course, gain no knowledge at that time.

There was a table with a candle flickering on it, beside which, sound asleep, sat Aunt Chloe's eldest girl. She raised her head and rubbed her eyes in a dazed way as we came in. On a pallet at some little

distance lay Master George. Even then I was touched by the rude efforts which these black people had made to show their love and devotion to the family. Everything had been done to render him as comfortable as the place would admit. There was a soft feather pillow under his head, and warm coverings were over him. His face had scarce more colour than the white against which it lay, and there was the same shuddering through the limbs that was noticeable in Miss Anne.

I examined his wound, which was in the left side, aimed with an entirely ignorant hand at the heart, and found it to be the shape I had expected, and that Lady Elinor's surmise was evidently entirely correct. In Master George's coat I found the dagger, which he had seemed senselessly to wish to keep, as it had been placed in the inner pocket. It was a horrid-looking weapon, with a carving of the God of Death and

a curious gully on the under side of the handle. Uncle Abe stood beside me in the candle-light as I examined it. Suddenly, with a cry of joy, he snatched the weapon from my hand, whipped a knife out of his pocket, and began running the point of the blade up and down the handle. His movements were pregnant with such big results that I found myself breathing unsteadily as I watched him. I saw him give a hard pressure on some certain point, and, with a clicking noise, an aperture containing a small phial was disclosed.

He told me that the custom of placing an antidote in the handle of poisoned weapons was a very common one in his own country, and his faith in it was so entire that we began giving Master George a drop at a time of the liquid which the phial contained, watching the results with passionate intensity. There came almost immediately a great quieting of the pa-

tient; the writhing in the limbs ceased; the cries became less frequent and more intelligent.

Having made what further arrangements I could for Master George's comfort, my thoughts turned toward the disposition of the captain. It was manifestly impossible to give him his freedom, and yet his retention might bring such a hue and cry about our ears as to further injure any hope which we might have of hushing the whole matter up. In this situation I decided on a curious plan, which was to consult the captain himself. From the moment of meeting him I liked him fine, personally, and believed him to be a man who would do his entire duty unflinchingly, but who could ever be trusted as a gentleman.

The interview was a strangely assorted one, for Uncle Abe had bound him so tightly round and round with ropes that

he looked like a strawed demijohn as he was brought into the cave. Our talk was perfectly frank and dignified. On my side, I stated the necessity, as well as the regret, of the fact of our being forced to retain him as a prisoner. On his side he showed neither irritation nor excitement at the prospect of being held, but said it was part of his profession to be prepared for surprises; on liquor being produced, he drank to our further acquaintance, and apologized, with a smile, for the awkward way in which he was obliged to pledge me, explaining, humorously, that his movements were naturally a bit hampered under the circumstances.

Giving some further directions to Uncle Abe about the way in which to communicate with me, I set forth again under the guidance of Aunt Chloe. To her I gave the gold pieces I had brought, telling her there was a little fortune awaiting them

if Master George was able to leave the country unmolested. The majesty of the law was but a vague image in her black breast, and the presence of the gold was immediate, so that I had little fear but that she would do everything her intelligence would allow to further our ends.

With the new medicine in my hands I hurried back to Deepdeen. It was nearing the dawn. A few streaks of gray were visible in the east as I drew near to the house, into which I had no sooner entered than I became conscious that some new calamity had happened. There was a hurried running to and fro of the awakened servants which seemed to be purposeless, while from the landing above there issued forth the most horrid cries and groans. I dashed up the steps, three at a time, to find Consuelo shrieking and rolling on the floor. In Miss Anne's door was Madame Dulany, and inside the room stood Lord

Harry and Lady Elinor, one on each side of the bed, trying to stop the poor girl's tearing at herself in a frenzy which was horrible to see. Lady Elinor's eyes sought mine with frank relief at my bare presence, and, by some quicker method of communication than speech, I made known the new medicine, which we began administering immediately. While the effect was not so marked as in the case of Master George, the patient began to quiet down, and by six of the morning she looked around with almost a rational glance at us in the room, before dozing off to sleep again.

CHAPTER XVIII

I WAS so wrought upon by the night's work and my worry as to the coming disposition of affairs that sleep was impossible, and I went forth into the open, harassed, and with a dumb anger in my heart for the suffering to which my lady was being forced. The day was but new come. The fields were full of blown daisies, the blackbirds were singing in the lilacs, and the smell of the growing things brought a kind of calmness to my soul.

The soldiers were all about still. I could see the blue of their coats as they moved to and fro on the river bank, and the gleam of their stacked arms glinting in the sunlight. Finally, the fatigue of the

night overcame me, and I fell into a deep sleep on the old bench beside the laurel hedge, from which I was awakened by voices—the voices of Lady Elinor and Lord Bedford.

It was a main bad time to approach Lord Bedford about anything, his nerves having been on the rack all night by his fear of Miss Anne's imminent death, and his own long stretch of anxiety; but naught under God's fair sun could excuse the talk I here set below.

"You think it was George who——" my lady's voice broke, and she waited for her unfinished question to be answered.

"I have as little doubt of it as you have yourself," came the answer from Lord Bedford's lips, in a voice as cold as steel.

"Do the people, the authorities, suspect?"

"I think so. I know the captain of the guard believes him guilty."

"You will do what you can to help us —will you not? He must be sent to England. He must, when he is found, be got out of the country."

"When I think of *her*, I feel little leniency toward George Grafton," Lord Bedford responded in a harsh voice.

"My lord," Lady Elinor's voice rang clear and low, "between us, here in the face of this great sorrow, let the name of Grafton be unspoken. He is your child. The lawless heredity which we gave him, which in both our families goes back for more than one generation, has culminated in him. I have stood much at your hands; this thing I will not stand. It is we who have murdered, if murder be done—you and I, my Lord Bedford. As he is, *we* made him."

"We have a precious thing, then, for which to thank ourselves, for a worse man than George, for his years, I have yet to

meet. I do assure you that if he is not hanged for this, there are many other things he deserves it for."

"What say you — is it of George you speak?" I heard my lady ask in indignation. "A better boy no mother ever had."

"Good God, Elinor!" Lord Bedford burst forth impatiently, "it's all very well to pretend before the world that you don't know. There have been times when I have admired your dissimulation about the matter. Between us, however, the thing is a bit unnecessary. George has already a past, where women are concerned, which I, at my age, would be ashamed of. At least three children within a stone's throw of your door are your own grandchildren. This affair of Caddie Brown——"

"Caddie Brown?" I heard my lady repeat, in a voice of piteous humility—"Caddie Brown?"

"Yes, Caddie Brown. In that affair he behaved like a cur."

"Listen!" my lady broke in, "you will say no more to me, and you must—yes, you must believe me, when I tell you that these things I have never known. If they be true, however, it seems strangely fitting that it should be from your lips I should learn that George is a man who, where women are concerned, can not be trusted."

"That is rather a nasty undercut, Lady Elinor. I was, after all—and considering all—pretty faithful to you."

"Considering all, yes."

"You were rather selfish about it, you know."

"I?" my lady asked, as if incredulous.

"Yes. I might get along as best I could. There was the child—Sir William's name must ever be looked out for. But what had I? A longing, day and night, for another man's wife, and little else. You

see what I became. Did you ever think that it was you who made me so?"

My day was at hand. The blood in my veins was dancing, and there was a kind of singing in my ears as of great joy. I heard my lady moan. Perhaps there was something in this which stirred the man's nature, for he said: "After all, things must fall as they will fall. If Anne recovers——"

"Anne," my lady said, "Anne, and yet again Anne. Ah! she will love you as the Church tells her. Her emotions are regulated and secure. So much she will give because it is proper; so much keep back, as befitting womanhood. Do you know that I—the daughter of kings—ah! what matter the bar sinister when the blood speaks!—am ashamed to the uttermost fibre of my being to have loved so slight a thing."

The sullenness in the man's nature, the strain of the times, the sting of my lady's

taunt, all told on him. He laughed slightingly.

"It's a bit hackneyed, even a bit theatrical," he said. "I suppose it's not the first time a man has lived to regret the fact that he has had a child by his mistr——"

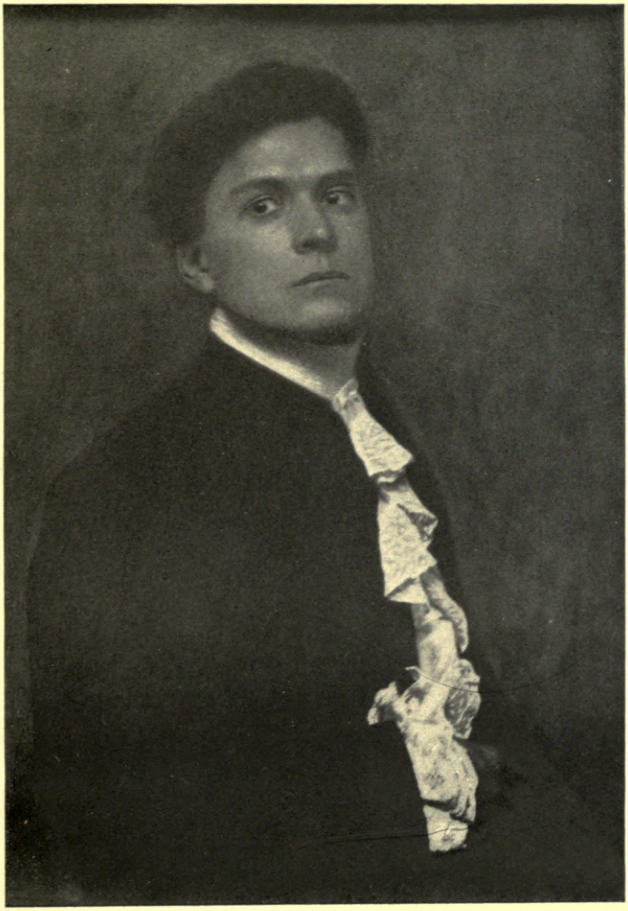
My time had come. Pulling myself together like a steel spring, I went over the laurel wall at a bound. I have often noticed in books that appropriate and dramatic speeches are made at such times. Between us three no such word was spoken. I bore my mission on my face. Lord Bedford saw me and fell back a step. His face went white, his head was drawn low to his chest. He wore no sword, nor did I. I heard Lady Elinor say, "Robin! Robin!" but the words sounded faint and far off, as in a dream.

Twice I struck and failed, but after all it was play to me. There was great, cold, white murder in my soul, and I knew the

man to be physically no match for me. At last I struck him just between the eyes, and before he could recover himself I struck again. His head fell limp, and he went down backward as one whose neck is broken.

There was in my mind no thought but to kill—to kill, and so make end; but the next time I struck a thing happened, so awful, that yet I thrill with misery as I attempt to set it down. My lady saw Lord Bedford fall, and noting my face, knew that from murder I must be saved. She rushed toward us, threw herself over him, and thus it was that, although a merciful Providence gave me sense enough even at that time to soften the blow, I struck her! When I think of hell it is of that I think always.

When this beautiful woman looked up at me, the blood streaming from her temple from the blow which I had given



her, Lord Bedford might have either died or walked away unhurt, for aught I was able to think of him, at sight of this. I helped my lady to her feet, to which she staggered, dizzy from the blow, stanching the wound with her handkerchief. When she was able to speak the woman of it broke forth: "It would seem as if we had permitted too much intimacy with you, Mr. Killduff—have made you so much one of us that you forget yourself and your position. It is not for you to settle, in your rude way, disputes among another class——"

Lord Bedford's hand twitched, and we both knew that consciousness was returning. Lady Elinor saw it, and suddenly seizing my hand, she raised it to her lips, kissed it, and, holding it against her heart for a minute, said: "For God's sake forgive me, Robin! I never can forgive myself," and, with her hand to her fore-

head, went quickly up the path toward the house.

There was no regret in my mind for what I had done as I looked at the prostrate figure before me. I remember thinking that perhaps, after all, he might die. There was joy in my heart at the thought of it. It seemed a curious and most undignified thing to fight with a man and then to run to the brook like a silly gomeral to get water for his revival, but to this I was forced. Consciousness soon returned for him—enough to be able to stand, though his face was livid with pain.

I hate to record what followed. It would have been more as I should have wished to put it down if he had shown surliness and an ugly front, but the breeding of the man returned to him with his sobriety and the bloodletting.

"You have done what was right, old man," he said; "I deserve it all, and more.

I hold no grudge. I can see that you are not only the better man of the two, but the finer. I have never thought much of you before"—and even in this speech I recognised the charm of him—"to tell the truth, I always thought a good old maid was spoiled when they made you a man, Mr. Killduff."

I smiled at him grimly. "Shall I assist you to the house?" I asked.

"If you will. I am afraid," with a whimsical laugh, "you have done for me for some time, but we will not go until we have shaken hands. You will shake hands with me, will you not?"

"I will not."

"You hate me so, then?"

"Not that, sir," I answered; "hate is the wrong word from me to you. I had a dog in the kennels once who snapped at the hand of the man who fed him; I shot that dog the next morning. As I despised

that dog, I despise you. I would not shake hands with you, though my life depended on it!"

"Ah!" he said, his anger rising in a flash, "there are ways to answer this."

"Not for me, my lord. You know as well as I that you are no match for me with the sword or the pistol, and, with the hate I have toward you, it would be fair murder. We have always been on the losing side, we MacLarens, and the family fortunes went down at Culloden, but my father's sword will never cross yours. It would be shamed to have the blood of you on it." A word had been bitter on the end of my tongue for twenty years and I spat it out—"You coward!" I cried.

"My God!" he said, in a kind of admiration of me, "the man has bowels."

CHAPTER XIX

ALL the day following I was conscious of no weariness or fatigue. There was a kind of nervous exaltation in me which made it seem as though neither sleep nor rest were a necessity. About four o'clock in the afternoon Madame Dulany herself sent for me to come to the library, where I found her in the deepest state of excitement.

"I suppose you know that Sir William has become aware of the trouble," she said. "Just how much or how little he comprehends we are not yet sure. It was that insane Spanish woman's conduct last night, and some indiscretion of the daft servants, that brought it about. Elinor is with

him now. She is herself—Mr. Killduff—wrought up to such tension that—there—is—some danger of her speaking to Sir William of things which had better forever remain unsaid. With his peculiar temperament, he thinks more of the disgrace of his son and the shame of it all than the sorrow or fear of that son's death. His constant speech is of the trouble that *his* child has brought into Elinor's life. You can see"—and here Madame Dulany turned so that her face was entirely concealed from the light—"the danger there is that my daughter——" She hesitated. We both knew that which neither would acknowledge to the other, and by that dumb, human sign-language our eyes said that further speech was useless.

"Will you go to him?" she asked. And then, after wiping her eyes, she added: "We can never repay the debt we owe you, Mr. Killduff. If it had pleased God

to give me a son I should have wished him to be like you."

On entering Sir William's room I found him asleep, the attendant telling me that the opiate had been given in double portion before having any effect. It was past midnight when he awoke, his mind wonderfully clear, with that clearness which frequently comes before the end. He smiled affectionately at me and desired that I should raise him a little. His face was grown thin and small as a child's, and his eyes were wavering in their glance, but he kept firm to his purpose of telling me something which was on his mind, no matter what the effort cost him.

"Robin," he said, as he took my hand, "I have tried ever to be a just man, and since my lady, my most dear lady, came into my life I have known a happiness which falls to the lot of but few. But I have had a secret sin, Robin. I have been

proud. Proud of the respect which I inspired, vain of it, with the pharisaical feeling that I was a bit more upright than other men. The Lord has seen, Robin, where my weakness lay. The child of my loins is being hunted as a murderer." The tears of weakness and old age and shame rolled down his sunken cheeks. "Oh, the disgrace of it," he cried, "the disgrace of it!"

The door opened quietly between his room and my lady's and a figure came slowly toward us. It was Elinor Grafton. There was a new, strange, unearthly beauty in her face, and it shone with the light of the stars as she came forward and stood by the bedside. "I wish to speak to Sir William alone, Robin," she said, motioning me away; and so I left them.

Having tried to murder a man in the morning, I felt, I suppose, little hesitation in playing the spy at night, for with the

words of Madame Dulany ringing still in my ears, and the strange look in Lady Elinor's eyes being fresh with me, I could but fear that she had made it her duty to speak to Sir William of things which, as Madame Dulany said, had best remain forever unspoken. It was a full minute before I heard my lady's rich, full tones, and I knew, how I can not tell, that she had knelt beside the bed and had taken Sir William's hand in hers.

"Oh, my most dear lord," she said, "if any thoughtfulness of mine, or any little act of kindness which you have ever known of me, still lingers in your mind, let it speak for me now. If the high love and friendship, which I call Heaven to witness, I have ever borne you has made your life any the happier, think of it now, dear, think of it now, and forgive me, oh—forgive me for a sin committed through passion and youth. None of this disgrace is your disgrace. In

George Grafton, believe me, there is no drop of your blood. The disgrace has all been mine, is all mine now. As God sees and forgives, he is not your son!"

I opened the door and entered, still with the strange uplifting, still with the compelling force in me—thank God—as I went toward the bed and raised my lady from the place where she knelt. "Come,' I said. She looked at me a minute through her blinding tears. "Come," I repeated, and led her away, taking her into her own sitting-room.

Turning to her there, I said, my anger rising high: "Are you out of your mind entire, Elinor Grafton? He has but a few hours to live, and to ease your own conscience you would take from him all that he has in life to hold by. Leave be your sin. The time when he will judge it is when he will know more reasons for it than he can know now, and where he will be

helped to your excusing by that Father who sees those reasons for our conduct which we can not see ourselves; who knows all and will forgive all." And I turned back to Sir William.

He was sitting exactly as I left him. Knowing what had to be done should be done quickly, I sat down and took his hand.

"Dear Sir William," I said, "there is still a trouble which, while it is not a serious one, we had hoped you might be spared the knowledge of, but I see it is better told. What Lady Elinor has said to you just now is, as you must know yourself, utterly untrue. You must know it," and I smiled, "for what other man had my lady ever seen, saving yourself, before the birth of Master George?"

I saw him brighten a little, and went on: "But the great strain of your illness, which, because of the love my lady bears you, has been hard for her to endure, com-

bined with the scandal of this late affair, the whole coming at that time when it is hardest for women to withstand such mental shocks, has so unhinged my lady that, at times, she is not quite herself. Madame Dulany told me but this afternoon of the strange things which she had been saying." I saw the troubled look almost pass away. I had ever been honest till now, and, though they say lying is always hard at the beginning, I did not find it so.

Then I told him of Master George's improved condition, and that there was every hope that in a month or so Miss Anne would be as well as ever, and, resting on my shoulder, he went to sleep.

A golden shaft of the newly risen sun had struck into the room and cast a bright light on his gentle face and white hair before he awoke. Twice he made as if to speak, and the third time said quite clearly, "Elinor."

Knowing this was the end, I called her, and she came quickly from her own room and knelt beside him, laying her raven head near his own white hair, and their eyes looked full into each other. What was told in that look, what confessions made, and what forgiveness given, will remain forever known to them alone. At last Sir William spoke.

"If there is anything which you have ever done, no matter what—*no matter what*—" his voice almost forceful in the repetition—"which, with your innocent conscience, you may have considered a wrong to me, I forgive you—and love you—and honour you—before all else in the world. You should never be judged as others. You are so much superior to us all, it were an impertinence to judge you so."

Loyal, loyal Sir William! There was a pause, broken only by Lady Elinor's sobs.

"When man comes to the end it is not

many who have such a wife and such a friend to help him cross. I have always hoped that it might be thus. I have wanted no priest; but only to have Robin Killduff's hand in mine, and my lady's pure voice to say 'Our Father' before I entered into the fulness of his presence."

Holding his hand between hers, she sobbed forth, "Our Father!"

"Our Father," he repeated, "which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us—and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us——"

Sir William raised his hand here, and repeated solemnly, "As we forgive those who trespass against us;" and then, with his hand on my lady's head, and a smile on his dear, kind face, he passed beyond.

CHAPTER XX

THIS great trouble of Sir William's death fell at a most calamitous time. There was the matter of the captain's detainment, which put us all in hourly danger; and, still more, the necessity of removing Master George from his present position to a place of safety. I had bethought me that, if there was any truth in the rumour that the Virgin Queen was at Newport News, the difficulty of getting him out of the country would be greatly lessened—the captain of the boat, Kenneth Craig, being a man of my own country, well known by my family, and we of Scotch blood ever holding fast by one another. Truth to tell, the said Craig had but little respect for the

new country, and would break its laws as easily as he would the neck off a rum-bottle, and with none the less speed if there was some gold to be gained by it.

By reason of the many preparations to be made, I had seen nothing of the soldiers until late that afternoon, when I found the lieutenant sitting idly by the river bank.

"Is Captain Godwin here?" I asked.

"No," he answered pleasantly; "he will not be back for several days."

This answer set my mind greatly at rest. If the captain's men expected him to stay away, there was far less danger of anxiety being aroused as to his whereabouts, and there was a breathing spell at least.

The funeral of Sir William occurred on the third day from his death, the whole country-side following him to his last resting-place. It so fell, in the ordering of the carriages, that my lady was forced to ride

with Lord Harry, and the thoughts which came to them both on that dreary ride must have made it one of the bitterest ordeals of their lives.

It was not long after our return home that I found occasion to speak to Lady Elinor, feeling heartless to force further anxiety on her this day, but knowing that there was nothing to take one's mind from one's dead like care for one's living, I outlined briefly my plan, which was to go directly by boat to Newport News, and find some bark willing to take Master George and myself to English waters. I mentioned my hope that the Virgin Queen might really be coasting around in the waters near Newport News, getting a cargo of tobacco ready, and the good chance of all arrangements being made with little difficulty if this should turn out to be true.

It was here that affairs took a most curious turn, my lady declaring firmly, and

with great vehemence, that where Master George was taken she would go too; that there was naught left in her life but him, and that she had borne all her strength would allow her, and this parting she could not endure. It was all in vain that I pointed out to her the increased danger it would make to have a woman of the party, even if George were able to be moved.

With what secrecy these preparations were put forward it were hard to tell. I was out at midnight sculling a boat down unaccustomed waters; I was made to hide and skulk like a thief in the daytime; I was forced to lies and deceits, and thought, with a gray humour, of my latter end if my present life went on; but, at the last, it all fared better than I could have hoped, for Kenneth's boat was lying in the harbour, and he not only was willing but eager to undertake the task of getting us away from these unfriendly shores.

On my return to Deepdeen, which happened late one May night—I think it was the twenty-third or thereabouts—I entered by the carriage-way, as I had done before. My lady was sitting by the entrance in the hall, reading at a little table. I had entered almost without noise, and she, looking up, quickly put her finger to her lips and motioned me to step behind a hanging curtain which partially excluded the light from one of the deep, long, south windows. I had scarcely concealed myself when I heard the measured tread of a sentinel, and, on peering cautiously around, saw one of the soldiers pacing up and down the south walk, and, looking into the hall again, discovered the lieutenant of the guards seated, facing the main entrance. There was evidently some new trouble brewing—a thing, I thought with some sourness, I could have done excellently well without. I waited patiently, with a wondering in

my head as to what this new arrangement might mean. That it had something to do with the captain's prolonged absence I felt sure; and from my lady's quick anxiety about my being seen, it was evident that I was accused of having a hand in it all.

It must have been gone fully the quarter of the hour, when she arose, closed the book which she was reading, and came over to the window. She yawned slightly, so that it could be heard, and then, in full view of the lieutenant, stood looking out into the darkness. Presently, in a whisper, she spoke: "When I overturn the chessmen, step on the porch. Wait!" and returning to her old position, said, with much sweetness and gentleness, "Would you like to play a game of chess, lieutenant?"

In the settling to the game Lady Elinor overturned, as if by chance, the whole set of chessmen, table and all, and, in the confusion that followed, I stepped out on the

piazza, standing well in the shadow as directed. The sentry was walking up and down, several times passing directly beneath my hiding-place. In truth, I saw little chance of my escaping, and when I thought that at four of this same morning Abednego was to meet me at the junction of Buler's Creek with the river, I waxed big with impatience. Presently, after what seemed to me an interminable waiting, the great door opened and a man of nearly my own bigness came forth into the light. As he stood on the steps I saw it was the new doctor from Richmond. He bade the sentry "Good-evening," and asked if the clouds in the east portended rain. On being told that the man's opinion was for clear weather, he answered that he believed a walk would do him good then, and that he would get his hat and go for a stroll. As the sentry reached the farthest corner of the house the man came hurriedly to-

ward my place of concealment, handed me a pencilled note, gave me a broad hat in exchange for my own, and hurriedly told me to walk boldly through the moonlight of the lawn to the old well and then drop into the river path.

There was fear in my heart as I went across that white light, knowing the sentry was watching every move, but strong in the thought that it was the doctor. When I reached the river bank I stopped to read the note my lady had sent. It directed me to wait till midnight, by the swinging tree, where news would be sent me.

Arriving at the spot, I swung myself high into the friendly branches and waited for the further enlightenment that was to come. I suppose I dozed off, because it was from bonnie Scotland, as it seemed, that I was recalled by a noise from below. Peering over from my hiding-place, I saw a woman, in a short petticoat, with a Kil-

larney cloak over her head. I let myself down from my perch, and addressing me, she said in a deep voice with a strong Irish brogue, "It's mesilf that comes from Mistress Grafton to you."

There was something about her which impressed me as a disguise, and instantly all my thought was for protecting my lady from any implication in the whole affair. I responded that doubtless it was for some one else she mistook me. Throwing back the hood, she said, "Why, Robin, didn't you know me?" and my lady stood before me. She carried a small reticule in one hand and a kind of hamper of clothes in the other, which she handed to me, and which I found afterward to contain her jewels and as much gold as she could gather.

As we fared down the path I told her of how my errand had succeeded, and she gave me news of the happenings at Deep-

deen in my absence. My disappearance and the unexplained absence of the captain had so justified the thought of some family complicity in the affair, that a reward was set upon my person, my lady said, and the fear for me was large in her heart, with the anxiety for the safety of Master George.

It might have been better had we had time to rest after our tramp to the place of meeting, but it was nearing two, and time was very precious, as Kenneth would be waiting. My lady said that, with the help of the doctor and Josephine, she thought her absence would not be known till the following afternoon; and this time, we felt, would be ample to let us reach the mouth of the river, Kenneth having agreed to come as far up stream as the draught of his ship would allow. The boat in which we found Uncle Abe waiting was a wide-bottomed one, heavy to row, without sail of any kind, but broad enough to be able to

accommodate without crowding the pallet on which Master George lay.

My lady's meeting with her son was so tender as to make the tears come to the eyes of Uncle Abe and myself. There was no remembrance of aught, save his great danger and the sickness from which he suffered, in my lady's face as she sat beside him in the stern with his hand in hers. Uncle Abe offered to go with us to help in the rowing, and, as it turned out, it was the mercy of God that we took him. We had eighteen miles to cover, and that as quickly as possible, with the knowledge that a mishap might land us all in such trouble as we could not bear the thought of.

I remember well the silence of the river as we rowed along in the shadow of the trees, hugging the shore, watching with fear the moonlight on the white dogwood blossoms, stopping on our oars at the dread of some splash in the water, or at the

noise of some frightened bird in its flight through the night.

Even in her anxiety for George my lady kept herself alert for any sound, and would ever and anon put up her hand and caution us as we proceeded, her woman senses enabling her to hear things which were dulled to our ears. It was nearing five when we turned really into the mouth of the river, and there, every scrap of canvas up and the boats lowered, thank God, was the Virgin Queen!

Craig had been watching for us since four o'clock, and it was with preparations to be off all made that he hoisted the boats and pulled up anchor, so that, by ten of the morning, unpursued so far as we knew, we swept past Newport News and set sail for the open sea.

All that day the ship held fast to her course, past the Hampton Roads, through the Capes, with a fair wind and apparently

no pursuit. George was made as comfortable as possible in Captain Craig's own cabin, and Lady Elinor devoted herself entirely to his comforting.

If there is some small confusion in my mind as to the events which happened—not as to the events themselves, but the exact times of them—it must be remembered that I write nearly twenty-five years after these happenings, and with no other assistance than my own poor memory. Nor would I put this adventure of ours down, save for the way it sets my lady forth, as the woman she was, with the fine bravery of a man, and the endurance of the women who have been great on earth.

It was gone, as I remember it, far into the first night when the trouble began which gave us some serious apprehension. This was from the increasing heat, which was both stifling and unseasonable. I scrambled up on deck, to find Craig and the first

mate anxious and alert. There was not a breath of wind, and the blackness was impenetrable. Almost becalmed, the brig sat on the waves in that dreadful silence and heat until the light of day began to break through the east. With it came a horrible greenness of both sea and sky, a gleam of green lightning being over everything except in the northeast, where the inky clouds seemed falling into the sea. About six of the morning there began to be unsteady puffs of wind, and by eight it was blowing a gale with the sea thrown into mountains upon mountains of water.

Up the sides of these the ship would climb, straining every nerve of herself, and then, for one frightful moment, would stay poised tremulously on the crest before diving headlong into the valley of water below. The terror of it has ever remained with me. The horrid catching for breath after the quick dives, and the sickness of

soul and body in the long onward roll, dauntens me still as I write.

The continuous northeaster was setting us constantly back upon the land, only farther toward the south, a thing the captain liked little enough, as he dreaded nothing on sea as he did the terrors to his brig from the reefs along the Carolinas. It was late in the afternoon of the third day, as I remember it, that, with a crash and boom, the main-mast splintered in two, sending one of the men senseless on the deck, where, but for the swiftness and strength of Craig, he would have been washed overboard. After this we did but lie at the mercy of the waves, drifting ever and ever toward the land, until the fourth day, when, within sight of some green shore, the vessel struck and with a shudder, such as seemed verily human, stuck fast.

During all this time I saw Elinor Grafton constantly. George lay unconscious

most of the while, and, save for the concern of him, she might have been walking the porches at Deepdeen for any fear she ever made manifest to us. She had made some mistakes, but hers was never the nature to whine, and she, till the end—yes, till the very end—settled her accountings in silence and with a calm face.

Once, on the second night, I think, she stood in the little cabin looking forth into the darkness, and she smiled at me as I came in.

"You have no fear?" I asked, and she must have seen the glory I had in her through my eyes. "You have no fear?"

"I have tasted such bitter waters of late," she answered, "that these would be but sweet drinking," and turned from me with the teeth set and the eyes half closed, as was her way when she would speak no more and would claim silence from those around her. I found her thus when the

vessel struck, and she heard the news of the boats being lowered with the look of a man taking his last orders.

Everything fell into a frenzy of confusion, and yet, where the captain was, there was a thread of orderliness running through it. Inside, toward the shore, we could see the water was calmer, and when, after the captain's inspection, the boats were let down, there was less excitement and fear than one would imagine, the present need for action taking away the time for fearful thought.

Lady Elinor and Master George, the captain, two sailors, the cook and the cook's wife, were in our boat, the rest of the crew, with the first and second mate, taking the other. Once inside the coral reefs, the force of the wind being broken, we found the water rough but the boats not altogether unmanageable, and were able, after much difficulty and exhaustion,

to effect a landing, the men wading in and carrying Master George, whom we naturally felt should have the first care.

This place toward which we were blown turned out to be an island much like the small ones which lie around False Cape. It was covered with vegetation even down to the water's edge, and was exceedingly moist and unhealthy in appearance, although, as we pushed inward, we found the land to rise into some moderate-sized hills.

During all the trouble that ensued the selection of a place of camp, and the lack of the very commonest necessaries of life, Lady Elinor showed never a sign of irritation or annoyance, but ever, with a clear head and calm word, helped and encouraged those about her. Thus were all of our plans suddenly changed and we thrown back into an unfriendly land, knowing not where we were, nor for how long we should have to stay.

There was nothing to hope for from the brig, a huge hole having been stove in her side, the firmness with which the rock was held in her alone preventing her from going down. There were repeated goings and comings back and forth, everything possible being removed to make our habitation on shore endurable. I had, by Lady Elinor's wish, set the men to work at constructing a house, she herself offering them six shillings a day as wages. They were rough men, and, although we hoped our stay would be but short, she thought them safer hard at work than left to idleness and their own wild thoughts. Of food, such as it was, we had plenty, and near the sea one is not liable to starve.

The house which the men constructed was of fresh wood, but waterproof and stanch and fairly well built. It had but two rooms and was badly ventilated, but it kept a dry roof over my lady and her son,

and we were able to bring some of the bedding and linen from the ship, so that Master George was made easy and comfortable.

As for me, I have spent far unhappier times. My lady was entirely dependent upon me. She had no one else to whom she might turn, and even the men recognised this almost as much as if I had been her husband.

All the time we kept a brisk lookout for sailing vessels by day, and at night built a signal-fire, taking turns in the watch that it might not go out; but no vessels came near, nor in all this time was a boat of any description to be seen, the sea-going ones staying far out on the water in order to avoid the treacherous coast. So we lived until the dog-days of August fell on the land; afraid to make very extensive explorations in the small boats, not knowing enough where we were to be free from

the dread of Indians or the worse horrors of fevers from the long swamps, of which we had heard such dismal tales.

Of Master George's condition I could not then, nor have I ever since, been able to come to any just conclusion. He was able, in about ten days from our landing, to sit in the rude chair which one of the men had constructed for him, and in about a fortnight could walk for a short distance without much fatigue. He would sit for hours, gazing out to sea, talking occasionally with the others, but he never, so far as I have been able to judge, entirely regained his reason. He would talk along rationally with me for a little while, and then, dropping his voice suddenly, would say, "Robin, where is she?" or "It was at twelve o'clock I was to meet her," and once, with great earnestness, "She let me kiss her shoulder—twice," this last being stated in the middle of a discussion about

the cooking of crabs, which we found in great plenty off the west shore of the island.

In July the heat became terrible and continuous, and in the latter part of the month two of the men sickened and died of some heat disease which Craig thought to be the regular swamp fever. In so small a community this was a great sorrow for all, and our spirits fell into the deepest gloom.

The day after Folsom—one of the men—was buried, Master George complained in the morning of a frightful headache, and all day was unable to move with any degree of comfort. Lady Elinor and I sat with him alternately, doing all in our power to allay the pain. We had, however, few medicines and less knowledge of the disease we were trying to stay, and the helplessness of our state appalled me. Our condition, in health, was a totally different matter

from that of a shipwrecked crew in a strange land whose numbers were likely to become bitterly lessened at the hand of an unknown malady. Our wretched plight so depressed me as to make me physically ill, and I felt, with a blind terror, that the life I loved more than my own was in every way entirely dependent on me.

The third night after Master George was smitten, Lady Elinor had gone to her apartment for the rest which she so much needed, and was with much difficulty persuaded to take. George was lying unconscious, but quiet, and I was dozing off myself, when he seemed to waken from a sound sleep suddenly, and turning toward me, gave me a completely rational look and essayed to speak. With the movement which he made, however, the vomiting returned, and the shuddering convulsions which I knew, both from Baxter and Folsom, meant the end.

That night was one of torture for Elinor Grafton. There was no other trouble that I had ever seen her bear in which she had not a heroic kind of self-restraint, but in this—this giving up of her only child—a frenzy of sorrow seemed to possess her, and after the end came, which was toward the morning, she wrung her hands and moaned in a dry agony fearful to see. It was impossible to move her from the body. She sat, leaning over it, holding the dead face against her own, moaning: "My baby! My little, little baby! Forgive, oh, forgive! Tell me that you forgive your most unhappy mother!" She shed no tears, and, by the time the little settlement had gathered around, was terrible to look upon in her dry-eyed misery, with her white face and set lips.

What preparations could be made for a decent burial were attended to from the house, and the afternoon after the death

the funeral took place, the haste seeming almost indecent, but being necessary for the protection of those still living. The spot selected for the resting-place was on a little hill upon which the setting sun seemed ever to linger longest. It was one of those days in midsummer when the sky was faint blue and far away, and all nature below appeared still and listening. The hush of the place was something frightful. Mrs. Hodgson and several of the men sobbed aloud, but from Elinor Grafton there was no sound. She stood beside me, dry-eyed, her eyelids drawn a little together, her face of a deadly whiteness; but once, when she heard the earth fall on the body of her beloved, did she seem, even for a minute, to stagger before this awful blow.

The captain read the burial-service, the men sang a sailor's hymn, and, at her request, I offered a prayer. As I prayed, prayed for strength for this desolate and

loving mother, robbed of the last thing on earth which she held dear, a thought came to me which, even yet, I ponder with fear. It brings doubtings which lead me far from my best beliefs; but still the question lingers as to why, if God is just, the suffering is forever greatest for the woman.

For the two days which followed the funeral my lady sat alone, nor did food or drink of any kind pass her lips. She neither spoke nor wept, but sat by the window looking toward the place where Sir George was laid. I knew that madness lay in the way she was acting, and, about eleven of the second night, took a resolution which made me feel a very brute in the clinching of it. I spoke her name outside the screen, but there was no answer. Pushing aside the ship's sail, which formed a kind of curtain, I entered the room. She was sitting, looking out of the window into the dreadful lonesomeness of the starlight

toward that solitary grave. I knelt before her and took her hands in mine.

"Tell me, before I speak what must be spoken, that you forgive me any pain I must cause you—I, who would die to save you the least pain."

There was the bitterness of life in the curving of her lips as she answered me: "What matter whether I forgive or not—I? Who am I to forgive? A deserted woman—a childless mother—a creature needing forgiveness of God and man—if there be a God, which I sometimes doubt."

"I come to you, not as a man comes to a woman, but as a man comes to a man, to ask you for help. You have a head to use, the real intelligence, which is ability to help yourself upward to your best. Your whole life for the last years has been a conscious preparation for the sorrow which you felt would be your portion some time

here below. Help me now by telling me how I can help you bear it."

"Ah!" she answered, "it is the grimness of it that this is the thing of which I never thought at all. I had thought of everything—of every other thing but this. I thought that shame before the world might be my part; that my sin might become known. I know now that to a woman like me it would have been the least of all the trouble if love still was mine. I feared sometimes that Sir William might discover; and while the sorrow to his dear heart was something awful for me to think of, I know now how little it appeared. I felt *his* love—I can not bear to speak his name—might be taken from me, and tried to be prepared for it. To be prepared for change—it was what Goethe told me. But of this—this—this—I never thought. He was so young, so beautiful, so fine. He was *mine. It was I that*

made him. What right has anybody, anything, to him, but me?"

"Listen!" I said, and I clinched her hands in mine so that I know the pain must have stung her sore; "can you nerve yourself to talk it out with me? Can you make yourself do this thing? Believe me, madness lies along that other way. Are you as strong and fine a woman as I think you—big enough thus consciously to help yourself?"

There were some seconds of hesitation, and then the look which those wear who have conquered self came back into her eyes, and she raised her chest as an athlete makes himself ready to stand a blow.

"I can help myself," she said, "and, I believe, you—poor, poor Robin!—I can even help you a little."

It was nearly morning when that talk was ended—a talk in which Elinor Grafton laid bare her soul to me, as a little child

might have done. The thing which came back and back, with painful iteration, was the questioning as to why God teaches us by sorrow only.

"Why," she asked, "couldn't I as well have been taught by joy?" And another thing which stuck fast with her was the questioning as to the birth of Master George. "What do you think his life was given for?"

"To save you from yourself," I answered. "It was your love for him that made you the beautiful character you are."

"But what of him?" she persisted. "Does a woman want to save herself at the expense of her child? If I could feel that, knowing all, he forgives all; that he *knows* now that an uncontrollable impulse which came from a great, great love is not real crime; and yet—" She made a pause for a moment, her face set hard, although the tears stood big in her eyes, before she

went on slowly: "I know for myself how nearly akin to crime is self-indulgence, and that the breeding of all crimes is in the lack of self-control."

The next day my lady expressed a desire that a new building might be erected for stores, which I knew was but her method to distract her own thought; and, day after day, she stayed with the men, directing and suggesting, occupying every moment, so that none were left for idle sorrows, and showing me that when she said, "I can help myself," she was indeed a woman of her word.

It was in the weeks following that we came to know each other in a beauty of friendship, one of great love and intimacy, which lasted till she left the world desolate without her.

We were, in all, about four months on the island before we were enabled to make our escape. A bark—the City of Bristol,

hailing from Bristol—was engaged in gathering a cargo of tobacco along the coast, northward from Charleston. The weather being fair, she stood farther in to the shore than usual, to save distance, and in the night had seen our signal-fire. The captain, thinking perchance the fire was kindled by castaways, lay to till morning, and then sent a boat close in, which we saw and signalled.

Never was greater kindness than was shown to us, and five days later we were set ashore at Newport News. There was no reason now why we should not return to Deepdeen. Sir George had paid his reckoning in full, and if there was any which I still owed, I preferred to return to the settlement of it than to go skulking off to England, and allow my lady to make the desolate journey and home-coming alone.

CHAPTER XXI

THE little town of Newport News was gay with the sunshine and the coming in of many fishing boats, with the golden light on their sails, when we stepped ashore from the City of Bristol that evening in early September. I found some decent accommodations for Lady Elinor and Mrs. Hodgson at a little inn called "The Blue Lion," where they were able to pass the night, so that I might have time to make the necessary arrangements for taking them up the river; besides which there were many purchases to be made of things in which they stood greatly in need.

My lady had, with the generosity which she ever showed—which was, as she herself

often said, in a great part mere carelessness—invited the captain and his men, who were without a ship of their own, to come to Deepdeen for a while; what she was going to do with this crew of drunken sailors after she had them there never entered her mind. She was forever doing things like this, and leaving me to take the consequences. Not that I would have had her changed in this matter. There was something peculiarly feminine and charming in the heedlessness with which she gave; but I think there was never any other on earth who had less knowledge of the value of money or things, or less sense in taking care of them.

Never had Deepdeen looked more beautiful than it did as we came to a full view of it from the river on the following day. The house stood out gray and impressive against the sky, the grounds were a riot of colour, and the haze of autumn covered

everything with a great softness and drawing together.

My lady walked beside me as we came up the path. She wore a long black cloak and wide beaver hat, which she had purchased at Newport News, and I remember well that the fatality of air which was hers from birth, showed never more marked than at this moment. She stopped to gather some late roses of a kind of which she had always been fond, when Lord Bedford turned into the carriage way from the direction of the stables. He was bareheaded, and wore the black which ever became him so well, carrying himself with a great jauntiness of manner. He looked, as he ever did, handsome and distinguished in the extreme.

His surprise at seeing us was great, and I make sure not all pleasurable; but, as he saw Elinor Grafton's pale face, there came some real solicitude for her in his manner,

and he expressed pleasure at our safe return. There had been little anxiety about us in the family, it being thought that we were safely arrived in England months before.

My lady's manner toward Lord Bedford was curious to note. It had something in it, always, of a mother's tolerance of a spoiled child; but now there was the remembrance of a great sorrow held ever in her look.

I heard him inquire about the safety of George, to which my lady replied, in a level voice:

"He is safe."

"And well?" Lord Bedford asked.

"And well," she answered—just those words, and no more.

The house servants came running out to greet us with hearty smiles and tears. Miss Anne, looking unchanged by her illness, came down the steps toward us, her whole face beaming with delight.

"Do you know," she asked, "that you have come back just in time? To-morrow is my wedding day. Aunt Dulany spoke for you in allowing us the use of Deepdeen, as we didn't know where to write you to ask for your permission. I think," she went on, putting her arm around my lady, "that I never was so happy before in my life."

Lady Elinor dined with the family that night. She felt, she told me afterward, that there might be some thought in Lord Bedford's mind of her grieving over the marriage if she absented herself. No one was present save ourselves, Lord Bedford, and Dr. Prout, who, as the years went by, became ever more one of the family. He gave forth, as his opinion, that nothing further need be feared from the authorities, as Miss Anne had entirely recovered; and that the whole thing was, in his judgment, by with forever. During the dinner Lord

Bedford was silent and ill at ease. My lady, however, was self-contained and interested in the coming wedding. She spoke to him when necessary, avoiding neither his glance nor his speech. She discussed the details of the preparations and the guests expected, and 'twas but once, when some mention was made of using Master George's rooms for one of the guests, that I saw her lips drawn together and a gleam in her eyes, which betrayed the anger she usually was so capable of concealing.

The whole household was bestirring itself early the next morning. It had been clear daybreak before I closed my eyes to sleep, my whole heart being with the dear woman who had a trial set for her in the oncoming day, such as few have ever been called upon to bear. She was in the breakfast-room as I entered; there were flowers all around her—chrysanthemums, asters, golden-rod, bracken fern, pile upon pile—

and she was giving some hurried orders to the servants.

As her eyes met mine when she bade me "Good-morning," my fear for her fled. The thing would be done; it would be splendidly done; here would be neither falterings nor hesitation; the joy that I felt in the greatness of her made the blood tingle in my veins, as when armies march by in the sunlight.

"We are needing you greatly, Robin," she said; "a wedding should ever be merry. Anne must have it as it should be. Come and help us with the ball-room."

All the morning Lady Elinor gave to the decorating, suggesting, planning, remembering details which others had overlooked, stopping in to break the tedium of the time for Madame Dulany, who was confined to her bed (either by disposition or indisposition), overlooking the wedding gown, which in all its white wonder was

lying ready, forgetting nothing, best of all remembering nothing, and acting as she ever did in a manner which lay above the power of most of us.

By noon—the wedding being set for four—she was dressed and ready to receive her guests. By reason of her recent bereavements, the gown she wore was of black—some long, soft, trailing thing which made her look more impressive than I had ever seen her at any time. She wore no ornament of any kind, not even her wedding ring, if such a thing can be called a mere ornament, for this she had removed the day of Sir William's death, nor did I ever see it upon her hand afterward.

It was little past the high tide of the day when the coaches began to arrive, their fair occupants, in bewildering attire, making merry with jests and gay laughter, as became wedding guests. From far and

near over the country-side they came, quite a number having been entertained overnight at Fairfax House as Lord Bedford's guests.

Father Spofford, grown very gray and stooped, was to perform the ceremony. I saw him take Lady Elinor aside and speak to her just before the wedding pair came in, saw that she nodded as one does who has complete comprehension of the thing spoken of, and noted no more.

It was just upon the hour when Miss Anne and Lord Bedford entered together. The man carried a kind of splendour about him, every line of his handsome face—and hate him as I have ever done, I have never been able to deny that he was a handsome man—softened by love or by what he thought was love, which to a nicer nomenclature was, to my thinking, mere passion. He wore a full court dress of white, with his own hair, and so covered Miss Anne

with his eyes, which had in them a curious light, as though they beckoned her, that all the ladies nodded approvingly and whispered words among themselves of admiration for such an ardent lover. Miss Anne, young and beautiful, fearless of the future, spoke her vows with no tremor of the voice, but gladly, rapturously gave herself into the keeping of this man, who never, since my return to Deepdeen, had once looked me in the eye. It was bitter to him that I was there. I knew it, and stood well in the light.

The past was whirling through my head as I listened to the solemn words of the marriage service. I remembered the night of the birth of Master George; the little hut where we had stood together; I wondered of what Miss Anne was thinking; remembered the joy we had felt at landing on that sad little island; but there was neither continuity nor result in these

thoughts. Father Spofford paused a moment, and then—

"Who giveth this woman to this man?" he asked, and my lady, who was standing a little apart, came slowly forward. There was a yellow shaft of the afternoon sun which had struck into the room and made a pathway for her as she came. She took Miss Anne's hand in hers, and, placing it in Henry Bedford's, in a voice low and firm, solemnly said, "I do"; and as she came back to her place beside me—I swear it solemnly on my honour—there was a smile upon her lips, as if Life's grim humour had for the while overcome her sorrow, and she smiled at the Ways of Men.

CHAPTER XXII

THE following winter Lady Elinor was noticeably fading. There was little of the time, in which it was possible for me to be with her, that I was far away—Madame Dulany's death about Christmas time being another reason which made her ever the more dependent on me. I knew the end was coming, and strove to leave nothing undone which might cause me the anguish which follows any neglect, real or fancied, of the ones we loved when they have passed away.

It was in the second November after the marriage that the English mail brought us news of the birth of a son to Henry, sixth Lord of Bedford, and the Lady Anne,

his wife, the child to be christened Henry Francis St. Martin. Lady Elinor read the news in a letter from the Lady Anne herself, who was wild with delight, and handed it to me without comment; nor did she ever speak of it in any way whatever, though it was but the next day that she sent for Mr. Clay, her lawyer, and made the will which left everything of which she died possessed to the child of her "beloved cousin, Anne, wife to Henry Bedford, Lord of," etc. Everything except Deepdeen. "For services too rare to admit of compensation in any material way, but as a slight token of the love in which he was ever held by Sir William and myself, Deepdeen, the outbuildings, etc., to go to Robin Killduff MacLaren, to revert to his heirs or to be disposed of, at his death, in any manner which suiteth him best."

In May she died, this fairest woman who ever lived. Of those last days I can

not write. She was my world. I saw her fading before me. Thank God—oh, how I thank my God for that—there was little pain! *That* I never could have borne. I had felt, too, a kind of joy in the thought that in the end I should be alone with her; that she would *know* how true I had been; but it was not to be. Toward morning her mind wandered.

"God is good, Harry," she said. "Oh, the peace of having you with me again!" And later her face was illumined by a smile the angels wear as she said, "It is a boy—a man child!"

Toward daybreak she spoke once more, quite clearly, "An I dream what I would, I pray to sleep forever," and the dark waters closed over her and she passed to the Dear Place where she shall be judged by that One in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

And I—there is naught ahead for me

except to wait to join her. Sometimes I wonder if, up There—— I will not set it down.

Meantime I can say only as I said the night of the beginning of this all. It is of Elinor Grafton I think. It is of Elinor Grafton I am always thinking, and shall be when the light of this world fades before my dying eyes, and the light of a better one, please God, shall dawn before my re-awakened spirit.

(4)

THE END

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